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# Promotion of a culture of peace and interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace

## Report of the Secretary-General

*Summary*

The present report describes the activities undertaken by the main United Nations entities to promote a culture of peace and interreligious and intercultural dialogue in implementation of General Assembly resolutions 71/249 and 71/252, highlighting new trends and approaches and suggesting future avenues for work in this area.

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# I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 71/249, on the promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace, and 71/252, on the follow-up to the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace.

2. In the period from May 2016 to April 2017, contributing United Nations entities consolidated and expanded their efforts to foster a culture of peace and dialogue, together and with other partners, in a field that has grown substantially in significance and scope with the United Nations renewed emphasis on conflict and crisis prevention. The groundwork for this strategic shift was laid in 2016 when the General Assembly and the Security Council adopted parallel resolutions concerning sustaining peace, in which they called for "inclusive dialogue and mediation" as part of a comprehensive approach to conflict prevention and peacebuilding (General Assembly resolution 70/262 and Security Council resolution 2282 (2016)). It is also stated in the resolutions that peacebuilding is an inherently political process that encompasses a wide range of political, developmental and human rights programmes and mechanisms. The United Nations focus on conflict prevention was further sharpened in June 2017 by the "Vision of the Secretary-General on prevention", with its call for a "surge in preventive diplomacy" to tackle the grave crises in the world and avert the onset of others.

3. The work of the United Nations system to promote a culture of peace and interreligious and intercultural dialogue has continued to gain strong impetus from the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which makes numerous references to peace in its Goals, notably Goal 16, on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies. Among other messages, the 2030 Agenda advocates for the equal participation of all in efforts aimed at building and sustaining peace, and it recognizes that, for sustainable outcomes, conversations around peaceful coexistence must never stop. The Agenda's universal application to countries in the developed and developing world, its focus on partnerships and its references to Agenda 2063 of the African Union and the programme of the New Partnership for Africa's Development also create new spaces for dialogue between regions and nations.

4. The present report demonstrates amply that targeted and sustained efforts to promote interreligious and intercultural dialogue are conducive to both conflict prevention and peacebuilding in a wide variety of settings. Dialogue creates the conditions for the peaceful and lasting resolution of differences, thereby contributing to preventive diplomacy. It also helps to overcome the ignorance and misunderstanding that undermine social cohesion, peace and stability in today's increasingly multicultural and interconnected world.

5. Many of the activities described in this report contribute to the United Nations efforts to combat violent extremism, the rise of which has emerged as the most significant terrorism-related challenge since the adoption of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in 2006. The United Nations and Member States have taken steps to develop a more effective and coordinated response to that evolving threat. The Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (see A/70/674 and A/70/675) was adopted in February 2016; that was followed, in July 2016, by the adoption of General Assembly resolution 70/291 concerning the fifth review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. Among its recommendations, the Assembly encouraged relevant actors to promote a culture of peace, tolerance and intercultural and interreligious dialogue. In May 2017, the Security Council, in its resolution 2354 (2017), concerning threats

to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts, welcomed the 12-point comprehensive international framework to counter terrorist narratives proposed by the Counter-Terrorism Committee (see S/2017/375), in which specific reference is made to dialogue as an instrument to fight extremism. The Office of Counter-Terrorism was established in June 2017 to provide strategic leadership to the United Nations counter-terrorism efforts.

6. As in previous years, the preparation of the present report was a collective endeavour, reflecting ongoing efforts to coordinate the work of the United Nations system in this important area. It provides an overview rather than an exhaustive list of actions, highlighting some of the major developments and stand-out activities to promote a culture of peace and interreligious and intercultural dialogue in the period under review. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which coordinated and drafted the report, is also the lead United Nations agency for intercultural dialogue and for the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013-2022), a significant multilateral initiative that reached its halfway point in 2017. As in 2016, the information below is presented thematically according to the major areas of the Action Plan for the Decade.

## II. Promoting mutual understanding and reciprocal knowledge of cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity

7. Mutual understanding and respect for diversity in all its dimensions are vital to achieving the "peaceful and inclusive" societies that are the aim of Sustainable Development Goal 16. People and communities everywhere wish to see their cultures and backgrounds recognized and valued. In our increasingly multicultural societies, celebrating diversity as an asset for all is a significant step towards peaceful coexistence.

8. The UNESCO Unite4Heritage campaign harnesses the protection of cultural heritage as a means to promote diversity, unity, reconciliation and human security, most recently in the Middle East and Africa, through the preservation or restoration of sites that have been targeted by those who wish to obliterate the cultures, religions and identities of others. In March 2017, in a groundbreaking development led by UNESCO, the Security Council adopted resolution 2347 (2017), in which it recognized the importance of cultural heritage for peace and security and affirmed that the deliberate destruction of heritage may constitute a war crime under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. To enhance the work it does on the ground, in June 2016, UNESCO hosted a conference on the theme "Cultural diversity under attack: protecting heritage for peace" in Brussels, which brought together more than 300 professionals and policymakers to discuss the role of culture in recovery and reconciliation. Intercultural dialogue was one of eight agreed areas of action.

9. Culture can also serve as a soft power tool to promote reciprocal knowledge and dialogue between nations in institutional settings. Around 25,000 people discovered the cultural diversity and artistic treasures of United Nations Member States thanks to the cultural activities programme of the United Nations Library at Geneva in 2016. In September 2016, the exhibition "Razza umana" (Human race) presented portraits by the Italian photographer Oliviero Toscani, showcasing the diversity of human morphology and highlighting the work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to combat discrimination.

10. The need for greater tolerance and understanding is growing in our increasingly multicultural cities. The first UNESCO Global Report on Culture for

Sustainable Urban Development, entitled "Culture: urban future", which was launched at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), held in Quito in 2016, stresses that cities are shaped by all who live in them. The report states that for societies to be peaceful and tolerant, cities need to safeguard the identity of all residents and take steps to ensure that all feel safe and included. It recommends that culture should be a core component of urban initiatives to facilitate social cohesion and mutual understanding, to counter violence and contribute to peacebuilding. In the light of the evolving make-up of city populations, the report also recommends that decision makers adopt policies that recognize and promote cultural diversity as an asset for social inclusion.

11. Religious and community leaders can use their influence to promote tolerance and understanding. Amplifying a trend observed in the previous report, in 2016/17 United Nations entities increasingly engaged with this constituency in their work to promote a culture of peace and interreligious and intercultural dialogue. For example, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) signed a partnership with Religions for Peace on "Faith over Fear", a campaign that encourages religious people of all denominations to publicly commit to welcoming refugees into their communities. The campaign complements other work that UNICEF is engaged in with faith-based and secular organizations, such as its ongoing Refugees Welcome to Dinner campaign, which encourages citizens around the world to share a meal and forge social connections with refugees and asylum seekers.

**Religious tourism to promote mutual understanding**

Religious tourism, one of the fastest growing segments of the tourism industry, offers another avenue to promote mutual understanding and appreciation of cultural and religious diversity. The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) estimates that 300 million tourists visit the world's major religious sites each year and that 600 million national and international religious journeys are taken annually all over the world, offering enormous potential to foster a culture of peace by promoting values common to all religions. UNWTO is currently developing a network of religious tourism in the Middle East that aims to promote the common heritage of the three monotheistic religions in the region and increase cross-cultural and interfaith dialogue and understanding. To explore this theme further, the Organization held a Conference on Religious Heritage and Tourism in Utrecht, the Netherlands, in October 2016. Participants discussed how tourism departments, heritage organizations and local communities can develop the social and economic impact of religious heritage tourism.

12. The Silk Roads have connected civilizations and brought peoples and cultures from across the world into contact with one another for thousands of years, permitting not only an exchange of goods but also the interaction of ideas and cultures that have shaped our world today. In the light of this enduring legacy, the UNESCO Silk Road Online Platform has revived and extended those historic networks virtually and furthered reciprocal knowledge of cultural identities by mapping the exchange of cultural experiences, ideas and values through art, trade and migration. An interactive atlas of cultural interactions along the Silk Roads is being prepared with the assistance of the Silk Roads network of focal points in 25 Member States.

13. Similarly, the landmark UNESCO General History of Africa series of publications has helped to promote greater knowledge and understanding of Africa's often overlooked contribution to the development of humanity. In a major initiative

that ensures that this knowledge is shared with audiences all over the world, with private sector support the collection has been turned into a BBC World Service television documentary series. A second phase of the King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Programme for a Culture of Peace and Dialogue also forged ahead with a number of projects including the publication "Writing peace" and the "Muslim-Arab legacy to the West" online digital library and pedagogical exhibition.

14. Social media, with their massive reach and interactivity, can also be harnessed to engage dialogue with global audiences around a positive message of diversity. UNESCO as the lead agency and other United Nations partners designed a social media campaign that gave International Mother Language Day, on 21 February 2017, greater visibility than ever before, particularly in Spanish-speaking countries. Messages on the day were among Facebook's and Twitter's top 10 posts of the month, boosted, notably, by the use of a dedicated hashtag for English, French and Spanish celebrations of the Day, as well as strong visuals.

## III. Supporting reconciliation and peace efforts through dialogue

15. In the period under review, the United Nations allocated a budget of $7.87 billion for peacekeeping operations. Globally, violence cost the world $14.3 trillion in purchasing power parity in 2016, around 12.6 per cent of global GDP or $1,953 per person, according to estimates in the Global Peace Index. The situation of the 10 least peaceful countries in the world was far worse: there the economic impact of conflict was equivalent to 37 per cent of GDP. Faced with overwhelming evidence that long-established methods of dealing with conflict have been failing, however much money is spent, the United Nations has been increasingly shifting its focus to prevention, an approach that places dialogue for reconciliation and peace at the front and centre of our efforts to "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war".

16. As outlined in the vision of the Secretary-General on prevention, the United Nations new "surge in preventive diplomacy" is predicated upon the recognition that wars can be ended only by the actions of the parties directly involved and their supporters to forge political solutions and tackle the root causes. The United Nations must also make concerted efforts to prevent new conflicts by promptly identifying and responding to early signs of tension. To make prevention effective, dialogue towards peace needs to be comprehensive, paying attention to the local, national, regional and international levels, and ensuring accountability. The examples in the present report show that United Nations entities involved in supporting peace efforts through dialogue are already applying these notions as they pursue their work.

17. All over the world, women play a decisive role in reconciliation and sustaining peace. However, although advances have been made, more than a decade and a half after the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), too few women are still formally involved in peace processes. The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) continues to lead efforts in this key area. In Colombia, its work to strengthen the capacity of women activists and civil society and its collaboration with the authorities ensured that women participated in all stages of the planning, negotiation and implementation of peace agreements. Women represented up to one third of participants in the country's peace talks, approximately half the participants in consultations, and accounted for more than 60 per cent of the victims and experts at the peace table. The peace agreement that followed contained 100 gender-responsive provisions whose implementation is

being supported by UN-Women and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. Women's active participation in post-conflict architecture and project development in Colombia will be decisive for sustaining the country's groundbreaking achievements. Through the Global Acceleration Instrument for Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action, UN-Women is now leading efforts to bridge the funding gap for women-centred peacebuilding in Colombia.

**Inclusive dialogue for locally owned peace outcomes in Yemen**

A key component of prevention is the participation of a broad array of actors to ensure national or local ownership of sustainable peace efforts, a principle the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) applies to its work to build insider mediation capacities and national infrastructures for peace. In Yemen, where it works closely with humanitarian partners in areas ranging from emergency needs to resilience-building, across parts of the country where active combat has ceased UNDP has been pursuing development action to diminish the risk of a return to conflict or radicalization of the country's large youth population. As with similarly focused projects in Guatemala, Malawi and Togo, UNDP has been helping to build social cohesion and trust through dialogue to resolve locally identified sources of tension. Mediation and arbitration have traditionally been conducted by influential figures such as sheikhs or religious leaders in Yemen However, communities have responded positively to opportunities for dialogue through which they have been able to constructively address their issues and concerns. By enhancing insider mediation and the capacity of civil society organizations to design and implement dialogue processes, UNDP is building capacity for conflict resolution as well as fostering cooperative relations in local communities.

18. UN-Women has also been promoting more gender-responsive peacebuilding in the Philippines. It conducted a mapping exercise that involved 614 women leaders and 104 civil society groups in the capacities of key organizations to engage in the peace process. UN-Women subsequently facilitated a data validation workshop that provided an important space for women and other stakeholders to voice concerns about the peace process and to gain greater understanding of the opportunities and challenges to participating in public life.

19. In Burundi, a network of more than 500 women community peace mediators, established by UN-Women with support from the Peacebuilding Fund, continued to ease the tensions that erupted in Burundi in 2015, more than a decade after the civil war. The women's role in conflict prevention serves as a model of the upstream peace work the United Nations is pursuing. The Peacebuilding Fund has worked closely with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UN-Women, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and UNESCO in Burundi, one of 25 countries in which it has financed more than 400 projects in recent years.

20. Strengthening the role of youth in peacebuilding is also a priority for the United Nations, an agenda with which the entities cited in this report are deeply engaged. In the period under review, the Youth Solidarity Fund of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations provided grants and technical support to 11 youth-led organizations around the world, working through local partners to prevent conflict and promote peace and social inclusion. In Nigeria, it helped to train more than 60 young Muslims and Christians to serve as intercultural ambassadors, promoting understanding and tolerance through community events that reached

37,000 people. In the Middle East and North Africa region, it provided citizen journalism training to develop the empathy and trust of Palestinians, Israelis and others by means of online and face-to-face learning. In December 2016, the Alliance of Civilizations launched its Young Peacebuilders programme, conducting a 12-country pilot in West Africa, to help young people aged 18 to 25 to gain the skills to promote diversity and prevent violent conflict.

21. The African continent, including its youth, is one of the global priorities of UNESCO. Within the framework of promoting a culture of peace and non-violence, the flagship programme of the organization's Operational Strategy for Priority Africa, 2014-2021, and as part of the Pan African Forum for a Culture of Peace in Africa-Luanda Bienniale, UNESCO held an international conference on "Prevention of violence and promotion of the culture of peace during electoral periods in Africa" in Luena, Angola, in December 2016. The conference concluded with the Angola launch of the Youth Campaign for the Culture of Peace in Central Africa, which aims to involve young people in actions to promote peace in their everyday lives.

22. Holistic, community-led recovery and peacebuilding processes are also being promoted in Africa by the United Nations Volunteers programme (UNV). In cooperation with UNESCO, UN-Women, UNDP and the Government of Mali, a two-year peace education project began in five towns in northern Mali in July 2016 to promote conflict resolution, non-violence, disarmament, human rights and gender equality by fostering the participation of the region's youth, young women and girls in democratic life. Youth centres are being rehabilitated for use as workshops for capacity-building and some 40 youth groups will be created over the course of the project. UNV has also been working with United Nations partners in Burundi and Kenya to provide youth with leadership skills and training to help them serve as agents of peace in conflict-affected communities.

23. In other parts of the world, UNV has been working with women and youth volunteers to conduct locally owned evidence-based research. In the Asia-Pacific region, UNV implemented a volunteer scheme through which marginalized groups collected data on 40 indicators of extremism and peace, a methodology that promoted community dialogue and decision-making to enhance peace, cohesion and resilience. In Central America and the Caribbean, a study of the impact of volunteer networks for peace and security increased the visibility of volunteer-involving organizations and supported their community-level role in the promotion of peace, justice, dialogue and reconciliation.

**A major inter-agency research project on the United Nations contribution to peace**

How to end conflict and sustain peace in the world is the abiding challenge of our time. In a groundbreaking collaboration with more than 30 United Nations entities that provides insight into the question, UNESCO and the Abat Oliba CEU University in Barcelona, Spain, have conducted a two-year research project on the United Nations system's contribution to peace over the past seven decades, recalling both its successes and failures and exploring ways forward. As well as reviewing the latest thinking from peace research on the changing nature of conflict in today's world, the project presents examples and analysis of current work by United Nations entities in conflict, post-conflict and fragile contexts that provide a counterpoint to some of the received ideas about the limitations of the United Nations system and its capacity to work "as one". The outcome of the research will be published in book form in December 2017.

24. Mediation is a central component of dialogue for conflict prevention and conflict resolution and a key element in the United Nations ongoing surge in preventive diplomacy. In the period under review, the Palais des Nations, which houses the United Nations Office at Geneva, remained the venue of choice for United Nations-led mediation processes and talks, in cooperation with the host country, Switzerland. The Office of the Director-General coordinated the work of all divisions and services that delivered "as one" in support of United Nations mediation efforts undertaken in Switzerland, such as the international discussions concerning Cyprus and the Syrian Arab Republic, including those held at Geneva. To highlight this work, on the International Day of Peace, 21 September 2016, the "Geneva Peace Talks" were organized with partner non-governmental organizations under the theme "Peace happens". Similar events were held in London, Nairobi, Ottawa and Stockholm. The third Geneva Peace Week, an event that showcased the peace activities of the United Nations and other international bodies in Geneva, was held in November 2016.

## IV. Building a framework for commonly shared values to foster social cohesion

25. Dialogue provides opportunities to reinforce the shared values that unite a society and enable its members to work together for the common good. Confirming a trend noted in the previous report, United Nations entities continued to engage very strongly with religious and community leaders in this area.

26. On behalf of the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Engaging Faith-based Organizations for Development and the International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development, and in response to the conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women at its sixtieth session, in 2016, UN-Women launched the platform "Gender equality and religion for the gender responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development". The platform explores how gender equality can be pursued through a religious lens and be implemented across an array of Sustainable Development Goals, from those dealing with eradicating poverty to health, environment and peace and security goals. In parallel, UN-Women expanded its work with men and boys on gender equality, specifically engaging faith actors. At the sixty-first session of the Commission, in March 2017, UN-Women and a group of partner religious organizations hosted an event on how men, boys and faith actors can challenge stereotypes on women's role in the workplace and in the family. On the basis of the outcomes of the event and in consultation with civil society partners, UN-Women will support the establishment of a civil society-led community of practice to promote the leadership of feminist faith actors in institutions and promote dialogue and conferences on overcoming stereotypes and achieving social transformation towards gender equality.

27. In the review period, UNFPA continued to facilitate national dialogues between traditional, religious and other stakeholders on reproductive health, women's empowerment and gender equality in the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. The Programme includes issues such as harnessing the demographic dividend and combating gender-based violence, child marriage, female genital mutilation and other harmful practices. As part of these efforts, UNFPA facilitated South-South experience-sharing between religious and youth leaders in Egypt, Guinea, Indonesia and Tunisia. UNFPA also addressed female genital mutilation in the Arab region through social media campaigns in which Muslim and Christian leaders from Djibouti, Egypt, Somalia and the Sudan condemned the practice and disassociated it from religion. At the country level, the ongoing partnerships of

UNFPA country offices with faith-based and civil society organizations in Africa, Asia and South America and the Caribbean also fostered social cohesion around issues such as sexual and reproductive health and family planning.

28. In a major development that can advance the United Nations conflict prevention objectives, two years of dialogue between religious and community leaders from faith groups in 77 countries culminated in the launch of the Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Atrocity Crimes. The Plan was the outcome of a consultation conducted by the Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect that involved 232 religious and community leaders, 30 per cent of whom were women. Intended primarily for religious leaders and actors, the Plan calls for the strengthening of interfaith alliances and networks, and the promotion of stronger relationships between religious communities. It also includes detailed recommendations for States, secular civil society organizations and the media, and contains an early-warning component for the identification of causes and sources of violence. The Plan's recommendations are relevant to a range of situations and deal with matters such as the prevention of human rights violations and abuses, violent extremism, conflict and other forms of violence.

29. Interreligious dialogue for social cohesion can also promote inclusive societies that "leave no one behind", a key pledge of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The office of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, which is supported by OHCHR, organized a conference on freedom of religion or belief and sexuality in Geneva in June 2016. The event explored resistance, obstacles and conflicts that exist in allegedly contradictory human rights such as the right to freedom of religion or belief and the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons. Also in the reporting period, a workshop on religion and religious freedom in international diplomacy examined the use of religion in foreign policy, development and humanitarian aid, and considered ways of advancing religious literacy and freedom of religion or belief.

**Dialogue to promote shared values on the rights of children**

In 2016 UNICEF successfully engaged with religious leaders all over the world to promote child protection. After consultations with 235 theologians and experts as well as 144 children in six countries, the Fund and the World Council of Churches signed the global agreement on a programme entitled "Churches' commitments to children: churches uniting for children in the pilgrimage of justice and peace". The agreement, which was communicated to the 348 member Churches and ecumenical partners of the World Council of Churches in 120 countries in March 2017, calls for the promotion of child protection through church communities; meaningful participation by children and adolescents in church life and society; and the promotion by churches of intergenerational climate justice, with support for initiatives for and with children and adolescents. Explicit mention is made of targets of the Sustainable Development Goals on ending violence against children, welcoming and supporting refugees and migrants, and addressing actions to mitigate and prepare for climate change. UNICEF country offices also engaged with religious leaders and faith-based organizations. UNICEF Egypt and partner organizations jointly launched three publications on Islamic and Christian perspectives on protecting children from violence and harmful practices. The publication entitled "Peace. Love. Tolerance. Key messages from Islam and Christianity on protecting children from violence and harmful practices" (2016), provides guidance for parents, caregivers, teachers and religious leaders on avoiding

forms of violence and harmful practices faced by children: child and forced marriage; female genital mutilation; discrimination; child labour; sexual abuse; absence of family care and homelessness; domestic violence; violence in schools and educational institutions; children in armed conflict; child trafficking; and violence against children on television and the Internet. UNICEF also pursued its partnerships with faith organizations in Liberia and Sierra Leone. The partnerships, which played a critical role during the Ebola response, focused in the reporting period on strengthening technical and institutional capacity to prevent harmful practices, violence and abuse against children.

30. The United Nations Office at Geneva also harnessed the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as an opportunity for dialogue with the religious community, holding constructive discussions with the office of the Pope in the Holy See on how to raise awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals through local churches worldwide. The Office hosted an executive briefing to Member States in Geneva by Cardinal Peter K.A. Turkson, Prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, on the Holy See's perspectives on the 2030 Agenda and the concept of "integral human development". To further engage with religious communities, an interfaith summit on the Sustainable Development Goals was held in the Palais des Nations during World Interfaith Harmony Week in February 2017.

31. The humanities, at their core, are the collection of disciplines which allow us to understand human culture, that is the ideas, norms and behaviours that make us human. In an era of growing global conflict and tension, the humanities can help societies to critically make sense of those aspects that we have in common, providing the basis for fruitful intercultural dialogue as a mechanism to sustain peace and development. The World Humanities Conference, planned and prepared during the reporting period by UNESCO, the International Council for Philosophy and Human Sciences and the World Humanities Conference-Liège 2017 Foundation, gathered some 1,000 participants in Liège, Belgium, in August 2017, building on consultation meetings in each region, to reflect on the role and responsibilities for the humanities in facing contemporary challenges and advancing the ambitious 2030 Agenda. In this context, in the outcome document of the Conference it was noted that it had taken place during the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013-2022), thereby further strengthening its substantive intellectual and institutional support to the realization of the Decade's objectives.

32. Among the numerous international days celebrated across the United Nations, many promote shared values by inviting societies to learn from the past and build a more diverse and tolerant world in the future. Key commemorations of this kind that the United Nations Office at Geneva highlighted in the period under review included Holocaust Remembrance Day; World Humanitarian Day; the International Day of Reflection on the Genocide in Rwanda; the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers; the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade; and the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

## V. Disseminating the principles and tools of intercultural and interreligious dialogue through quality education and the media

33. At a time when the global migration trend and other factors are bringing people of different backgrounds and religions into ever closer contact, accompanied

by a corresponding rise in divisive political populism and violent extremism, equipping the next generation with the tools of tolerance and cultural literacy is more crucial than ever. UNESCO is at the forefront of efforts to foster intercultural and interreligious dialogue in education, notably through its Global Citizenship Education initiative. The focus of this work has sharpened since UNESCO became lead United Nations agency for education for the prevention of violent extremism in implementation of the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism. Addressing the Leaders' Summit on Countering ISIL and Violent Extremism in New York in September 2016, the Director General of UNESCO, Irina Bokova, described education for the prevention of violent extremism as "the new front line for hearts and minds".

34. As part of an ongoing drive to build crucial momentum on education for the prevention of violent extremism among policymakers, UNESCO produced "Preventing violent extremism through education: a guide for policymakers" (2017), on the development of inclusive and non-discriminatory education policies. In the review period, local and regional capacity-building initiatives took place in Addis Ababa, Almaty, Dakar and Johannesburg. More than 200 education policymakers, experts and youth advocates from nearly 70 countries came together to seek a common understanding of education for the prevention of violent extremism at the first UNESCO International Conference on the Prevention of Violent Extremism through Education: Taking Action, held in New Delhi in September 2016. Teachers and other practitioners from around the world attended the Third UNESCO Forum on Global Citizenship Education: the role of teachers, in Ottawa in March 2017.

35. In a world in which media and social media are ever more powerful vectors for shaping public opinion, the work of UNESCO on freedom of expression, press freedom and media and information literacy also plays an essential role in fostering dialogue for mutual understanding. Awareness of these issues was raised during the annual Media and Information Literacy and Intercultural Dialogue Week, 30 October to 6 November 2016, whose highlight was the international conference in Sao Paulo, Brazil. In 2016, UNESCO took further steps to advance its media and information literacy curriculum, adapting it as an interreligious training resource in cooperation with the Vienna-based King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue. Piloting of the UNESCO media and information literacy curriculum for teachers is under way at six universities in Nigeria. The organization also launched a global survey on youth perspectives on media, interreligious dialogue and online hate, and radical and extremist content. More than 2,000 young people from over 100 countries participated in the survey.

36. In an ongoing project that targets both media production and media consumption, UNESCO is developing an international network of "interculturally competent" and media literate young journalists and researchers in collaboration with partner organizations in Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, Yemen and other countries in the Arab region. Through capacity-building by more experienced professionals, the network seeks to impart knowledge, skills and attitudes that will enhance participants' ability to report fairly and contribute to a culture of peace.

**Promoting inclusion through film**

Creative media are also a powerful tool for dialogue. The annual Plural + youth video festival, a joint initiative of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations and the International Organization for Migration, held in New York in November, encourages young people from all over the world to share their creative vision through short videos on topics such as migration, diversity and social inclusion. The 2017 edition of the event includes a new award, for the prevention of xenophobia. Winning videos have been screened in dozens of festivals, and cinemas, and broadcast on television networks throughout the world.

37. In the reporting period, the Department of Public Information worked at the global, regional and local levels to promote peace and mutual understanding via its multimedia platforms in six official United Nations languages, Kiswahili and Portuguese, and through its 59 active United Nations Information Centres, which reach out to local populations through local languages. Spreading the values of mutual understanding and diversity, to mark the International Decade for People of African Descent (2015-2024), the Department promoted knowledge of, and respect for, the contributions of people of African descent to societies, through special events and multimedia material. The Department also participates in the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Engaging Faith-based Organizations for Development. As part of its Focus on Faith series, the Department organized a briefing for non-governmental organizations on "Finding a new home: the role of faith-based organizations in refugee assistance and refugee resettlement work".

38. The Department's network of United Nations Information Centres supported an array of campaigns and commemorated international days and observances that promote a culture of peace and mutual understanding. For example, as part of the "Together" campaign to promote respect and dignity for refugees and migrants, the Centre in Canberra produced a video series featuring the personal stories of those who have successfully rebuilt their lives in Australia. In the lead-up to the seventieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in 2018, the Department has launched a video campaign encouraging people around the world to record themselves reading an article of the Universal Declaration in their native language.

39. In the reporting period, the United Nations Office at Geneva promoted United Nations campaigns and disseminated key declarations by United Nations officials and others on issues that include the promotion of cultures, religions and intercultural and interreligious dialogue. The Office's social media accounts reach millions of people annually: cumulatively, the United Nations Geneva Twitter, Facebook and Instagram accounts had 423,700 followers as of May 2017. The Office contributed to changing the negative narrative on migrants and refugees through its promotion of the "Together" campaign on respect, safety and dignity for all, as well as hosting the launch of the OHCHR "Stand up for someone's rights" campaign.

## VI. Fostering dialogue for sustainable development and its ethical, religious, social and cultural dimensions

40. The World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue, organized by the Government of Azerbaijan in cooperation with UNESCO, the Alliance of Civilizations, UNWTO, the Council of Europe and the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural

Organization, has established itself as a key global platform for promoting intercultural dialogue. The fourth biennial Forum, on the theme "Advancing intercultural dialogue: new avenues for human security, peace and sustainable development", held in Baku early in May 2017, hosted more participants, events and sessions than any previous edition, while its high-level dimension was enhanced by a high-level meeting on countering violent extremism through girls' education and a ministerial meeting. During the two-day event, around 800 stakeholders from more than 120 countries discussed sharing resources, knowledge and experience, opening up new avenues for joint thinking and action towards the aspirations of the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures, Sustainable Development Goal 16 to promote peaceful and inclusive societies, and the Baku Process, which has been at the forefront of advocating for dialogue among cultures since 2008.

41. Scientific cooperation has long brought peoples and cultures together, a message that is underlined every year on World Science Day for Peace and Development, which will be celebrated in November 2017 during the biennial World Science Forum in Jordan. An inspiring example of such cooperation can be found in the SESAME (Synchrotron-light for Experimental Science and Applications in the Middle East) International Research Centre that opened in Amman in 2017, with support from UNESCO. The organization also fosters inclusive dialogue between those who hold precious local and indigenous knowledge and the scientific community, notably on climate change adaptation and sustainable development, through its Local and Indigenous Knowledge System (LINKS). Workshops were scheduled in six African countries in the period under review, while an Indigenous Knowledge Day was organized during the twenty-second session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Marrakesh in November 2016.

42. The comprehensive 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development also extends its reach to the maritime environment: Goal 14 concerns itself with conserving and sustainably using the oceans, seas and maritime resources, while the target under Goal 16 on preventing violence and combating terrorism and crime also has relevance for maritime security. The International Maritime Organization (IMO) fosters dialogue on maritime security and the marine environment to promote "safe, secure and efficient shipping on clean oceans". In 2016 IMO encouraged dialogue around these themes on World Maritime Day, calling for a holistic interagency approach to address the whole range of issues concerning the maritime environment. The annual Day of the Seafarer also provided a platform for seafarers and maritime personnel to share their experiences with the general public and raise awareness of the value and importance of maritime transport.

43. Interventions that promote food security and access to natural resources can also be used to foster dialogue, while helping to advance Goal 1 on poverty, Goal 2 on food security, and the "peaceful and inclusive societies" of Goal 16. Through its work, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) strengthens social cohesion, generates peace dividends, reduces conflict drivers and builds the legitimacy and capacity of governments. The organization facilitated the re-establishment of intercommunity dialogue on land access in the contested Abyei area between the Sudan and South Sudan. In the Central African Republic, FAO supported the stabilization process to end the conflict between the Muslim ex-Séléka and Christian anti-Balaka movements; eased historical tensions between the country's pastoralists and farmers; and lowered the risk of vulnerable groups joining militias through agriculture projects to promote the economic inclusion of youth. The organization has also helped to build the resilience to natural disasters of rival Muslim and Buddhist communities in conflict-affected Rakhine State,

Myanmar, carrying out needs assessments and beneficiary identification with the participation of the communities concerned.

**Promoting criminal justice and crime prevention**

Dialogue that builds capacity to uphold human rights and encourages the establishment of effective and accountable institutions is a key dimension of sustainable development. An example is the work of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in criminal justice and crime prevention, through which the Office helps Member States to integrate into their policies and programmes issues such as employment, education, health and urban planning. Among other activities in this area, UNODC continued to promote peace, tolerance and understanding through sport for crime prevention among at-risk youth, launching pilot activities in Brazil, Kyrgyzstan and South Africa. Further to the adoption by United Nations Member States in 2015 of the Doha Declaration on Integrating Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice into the Wider United Nations Agenda to Address Social and Economic Challenges and to Promote the Rule of Law at the National and International Levels, and Public Participation, which emphasizes education for children and youth to prevent crime and corruption, UNODC launched the Education for Justice (E4J) initiative to foster a culture of lawfulness among children and youth and to increase both their expectations and their future contribution to fair, transparent and accountable institutions. The Office also assisted countries in the Sahel region and the Middle East and North Africa on criminal justice related to the recruitment and exploitation of children by terrorist and violent extremist groups. Activities such as this also fulfil the UNODC mandate on terrorism prevention, through which it delivers 50 per cent of the projects under the capacity-building pillar of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, as well as contributing to implementation of the recommendations in the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism on strengthening and promoting the rule of law and human rights. UNODC also partners with OHCHR in capacity-building on gender aspects of the investigation of terrorism offences.

44. UNFPA fosters dialogue for sustainable development through its capacity-building support for culturally sensitive and gender-responsive national action plans. In the period under review, UNFPA collaborated with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali and UN-Women to improve access to justice for women survivors of violence. It also leads an information-sharing platform with other stakeholders on scaling up the prevention of gender-based violence and female genital mutilation. In the period under review, UNFPA worked with the Government and Islamic organizations in Indonesia and Myanmar on Islamic practices that support family planning. In Honduras and Nicaragua, it supported the establishment of round tables for indigenous and Afro-descendant youth on making sexual and reproductive health care more culturally acceptable and youth- and adolescent-friendly, processes that led to the development of national plans to prevent early pregnancy. UNFPA also played a key role in developing the five-year national strategy against domestic violence in Kosovo and helped Kosovo to organize its Sixteen Days of Activism against gender-based violence, whose prevention message reached around 50,000 people.

45. With its emphasis on targeting the drivers of violent extremism, the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (see A/70/674 and A/70/675) provides further scope for, and is strengthened by the holistic promotion of a culture of peace and interreligious and intercultural dialogue. The Plan, whose

implementation is coordinated by the Office of Counter-Terrorism, confirms that preventing violent extremism is the responsibility of Member States under the Charter of the United Nations and other human rights instruments. In the reporting period, United Nations entities that are members of the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force helped Member States to improve existing programmes to tackle the drivers of violent extremism and introduce new initiatives to close gaps. They also worked through an "all-of-United Nations" approach to help national, regional and international organizations to develop plans to prevent violent extremism. The involvement of civil society, religious groups, various government actors, youth, families, women, the media, the private sector, and cultural and educational leaders has been encouraged to ensure broad and inclusive ownership of plans to prevent violent extremism.

46. The UNDP global programme on the prevention of violent extremism, which was adopted in March 2016, both responds to immediate needs that arise from violent extremism and also addresses its root causes. Globally the programme aims at strengthening respect for human rights and the rule of law; providing socioeconomic opportunities; strengthening the participation of women, youth and other excluded groups in decision-making; prevention and mediation; and promoting inclusion and tolerance. In the Lake Chad Basin countries, UNDP is strengthening early recovery efforts of women and youth in the far north of Cameroon; strengthening community security and resilience in Diffa, the Niger; and preventing radicalization in north-eastern Nigeria and Chad, where it is engaging women and youth through sport and institutional capacity-building. In Kosovo, UNDP undertook research and baseline assessment on countering violent radicalization and it collected gender disaggregated data on returned foreign fighters. UNDP is also currently conducting groundbreaking research on the spread of violent extremism in prisons, based on exchanges with former terrorist fighters who were imprisoned after their return from ISIL-held territories, as well as with their families and communities.

47. If given appropriate opportunities to make a positive contribution, the world's fast-growing youth population will be instrumental in achieving sustainable development. Over the past three years, the Networks of Mediterranean Youth project (2014-2017), implemented by UNESCO and funded by the European Union, has empowered more than 4,000 young women and men from 10 Mediterranean countries, enhancing their mobilization on challenges related to democracy, peacebuilding and regional dialogue. The project has reinforced their policy analysis and dialogue skills, their representation in mainstream media and their employability. Over 20 North-South-South exchanges and intercultural interactions also brought youth, policymakers and media professionals together to build consensus on reconciliation, peace and the youth agenda at the regional level.

48. In this International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, the World Tourism Organization has been raising awareness of the importance of sustainable tourism for economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental and cultural preservation. Its "Travel, enjoy, respect" campaign focuses on increasing awareness among tourists that they are contributing to sustainable development. The manual "Tips for a responsible traveller" was produced as part of the campaign and is based on ideas from the World Committee on Tourism Ethics. The tips include advice such as honouring your hosts and common heritage and being an informed and respectful traveller. It invites travellers to learn more about their destination and the local population in order to gain understanding and cultural sensitivity. UNWTO also promotes the implementation of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, to maximize tourism's socioeconomic impact and minimize negative effects, while helping to

achieve the Sustainable Development Goals on reducing poverty and fostering sustainable development, peace and mutual understanding.

## VII. Conclusion

49. The United Nations focus on prevention has introduced a new dynamic that has made the promotion of a culture of peace and interreligious and intercultural dialogue increasingly the business of the entire United Nations system. As this report illustrates, action in this area is being implemented in an ever wider array of settings with multiple new actors, including more United Nations development entities, as awareness continues to grow of dialogue's capacity to facilitate positive outcomes and, by its very nature, promote inclusivity. Through these efforts, the entities concerned are helping to lay the groundwork for the United Nations "surge in preventive diplomacy", which calls for the strengthening of mediation and facilitation capacities in the broadest terms, and at all levels, as part of a comprehensive dialogue towards peace.

50. A strong current of human rights runs through the work described in this report, which resonates with the United Nations focus on conflict prevention and sustaining peace, as well as with its efforts to combat terrorism. Among other trends that can be observed, the report confirms that the United Nations system is engaged increasingly with religious and other civil society groups, particularly through dialogue that fosters shared values to strengthen social cohesion. Dialogue for capacity-building and to promote resilience is another recurrent theme, notably through activities that develop peacebuilding and other skills among women and youth. This inclusivity goes to the heart of the pledge in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to "leave no one behind".

51. Diverse constituencies were not only the targets but increasingly the agents of action to promote a culture of peace in the period under review. This broader, "bottom-up" participation of stakeholders in the design and implementation of initiatives is conducive to the sustainability of those efforts over time across all areas of the United Nations work. For example, the comprehensive international framework to counter terrorist narratives, adopted by the Security Council in 2017, points out that vulnerable young people are more likely to be convinced by the viewpoints of peers and role models than by official statements.

52. Future action to promote a culture of peace and interreligious and intercultural dialogue can only benefit from an enhanced emphasis on the broad participation of different stakeholders in all areas and at all levels of society. Among tools the United Nations system will have at its disposal to pursue this "people-centred approach", the forthcoming global progress report on youth, peace and security, currently being coordinated by a joint UNFPA/Peacebuilding Support Office secretariat, will provide new avenues to promote youth engagement in peace.

53. There is growing awareness across the United Nations system that dialogue creates an enabling environment for the peaceful pursuit of broader development goals. Further effort to apply an interreligious and intercultural dialogue "lens" to activities that have other principal objectives will add value by contributing to conflict prevention and peacebuilding across the spectrum of the United Nations work. By the same token, with the commitment of the whole of the United Nations system, Member States and partners, concrete action to address genuine grievances, notably the root causes of conflict, such as inequality, sectarian divides, poor governance, marginalization and exclusion, can transform the goodwill and renewed hope that dialogue generates into an enduring "culture of peace".

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Agenda item 114 (d)
**Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: election of fifteen members of the Human Rights Council**

## Note verbale dated 14 September 2017 from the Permanent Mission of Mexico to the United Nations addressed to the Secretariat

The Permanent Mission of Mexico has the honour to state that the Government of Mexico has decided to present its candidature for membership in the Human Rights Council for the period 2018-2020 at the elections to be held on 16 October 2017 during the seventy-second session of the General Assembly.

In that connection, the Permanent Mission of Mexico is pleased to present the key contributions and commitments of the Government of Mexico to the protection and promotion of human rights at the national and international level (see annex).

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## Annex to the note verbale dated 14 September 2017 from the Permanent Mission of Mexico to the United Nations addressed to the Secretariat

## Candidature of Mexico for membership of the Human Rights Council for the period 2018-2020

### Pledges and contributions of Mexico to the promotion and protection of human rights

1. The candidature of Mexico for election to the Human Rights Council is based on its unwavering commitment to human rights at the national and international level. The strongest foundation for that commitment is its Constitution, which provides that promoting, upholding, protecting and safeguarding human rights must be at the heart of government action and makes human rights one of the guiding principles of its foreign policy.

2. The Government of Mexico has accordingly developed a robust normative and institutional framework to safeguard the human rights of all its citizens. This framework is continually reviewed and strengthened through democratic dialogue and cooperation with international human rights mechanisms. The aim is to address human rights challenges through due attention and follow-up.

3. In parallel, the Government of Mexico has worked to advance the human rights agenda at the international level by strengthening the standards and institutions that form part of the international human rights system, aware that they represent a valuable tool to guide and support national efforts.

4. Mexico recognizes that the Human Rights Council is the body that is best suited to further the international human rights agenda. The Council, together with its mechanisms and subsidiary bodies, is the central component of the universal human rights system.

5. In this document, Mexico sets out the key steps it has taken to protect and promote human rights at the national and international level, as well as the proposals and pledges it will work on as a member of the Human Rights Council for the period 2018-2020.

## I. Mexico in the Human Rights Council: an actor with global responsibility

6. Convinced that the three pillars upon which the United Nations is founded — peace and security, development and human rights — are interdependent and interrelated, Mexico has worked decisively to consolidate and strengthen the Council as the body "responsible for promoting universal respect for the protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction of any kind and in a fair and equal manner".

7. Mexico has sought to put this commitment into practice during its three terms as a member of the Council:

- 2006-2009: Mexico had the honour of holding the first presidency of the Council, during which it shouldered the vast and delicate responsibility of leading the negotiations that resulted in the agreement on the institutional basis of the new body.

- 2009-2012: Mexico participated actively in the quinquennial review of the Council, making innovative proposals to increase the Council's potential and to resolve the problems identified during its first five years of existence.
- 2014-2016: Mexico actively fostered better working methods and the appropriate use of all the Council's tools, including by promoting international cooperation and the Council's role in preventing human rights crises.

## II. Accountability: action taken by Mexico to fulfil its commitments (2014-2016)

8. During the period 2014-2016, Mexico based its action in the Human Rights Council on the commitments and voluntary pledges it made when it was elected. Its initiatives have been classified into three groups and are summarized below.

### Strengthening the international human rights system, in particular the Human Rights Council

9. Mexico has actively promoted initiatives that increase cross-regional dialogue and collaboration within the Human Rights Council, having recognized the need for different national cultures and realities to join forces in order to be able to work towards common goals.

10. Mexico has participated actively in multiple initiatives and dialogues aimed at strengthening the capacities of the Council to carry out its mandate fully and effectively in an objective and balanced manner.

11. Mexico has contributed to the identification of practical means of improving the Council's work by supporting thematic meetings to analyse the Council's coordination and cooperation with other United Nations entities with a view to giving it a greater role in the prevention of massive human rights violations.

12. Mexico has fostered synergies between the mandates of Council mechanisms by promoting ongoing communication between them and by recognizing their intersectionalities with a view to maximizing their potential and avoiding the duplication of effort and resources.

13. Mexico has rationalized its initiatives in the Council and the General Assembly so that they are complementary and relevant to the mandate of each forum. During the period 2014-2016, Mexico introduced 37 draft resolutions. In addition, Mexico:

- Sponsored 121 resolutions
- Sponsored 39 side events
- Organized 10 panel discussions
- Initiated five joint statements

14. Mexico has endeavoured to ensure that the Council functions as a two-way forum for dialogue and cooperation. In other words, it should fully develop its mandate on prevention while also facilitating technical assistance and cooperation to strengthen States' capacity to protect and promote human rights. Mexico has also encouraged the Council to take a balanced and objective approach to its obligation to address specific human rights situations by considering all information sources and by seeking as much cooperation as possible from the States in question.

15. Convinced that non-governmental actors make a vital contribution to the Council's work, Mexico promotes open and dynamic dialogue with parliaments,

national human rights institutions, civil society organizations, businesses and academia.

16. Mexico regularly introduces, alone or in association with other countries, draft resolutions that aim to afford greater protection to the rights of individuals in situations of vulnerability of marginalization and prevent discrimination and human rights violations on any grounds.

17. Similarly, Mexico has initiated and participated in joint statements on key issues such as gender equality, transparency and access to information, and the right to privacy.

18. Mexico upholds the universal periodic review as the most effective universal tool for dialogue and cooperation on human rights. Mexico participated in its second review in October 2013 and is following up on the 166 agreed recommendations though a participatory national process. Mexico has undertaken to implement and follow up on these recommendations through its 2014-2018 National Human Rights Programme. In addition, pursuant to the principles of cooperation, universality and equal treatment, Mexico participates in the reviews of all States under the universal periodic review. It submits constructive questions, remarks and recommendations with a view to supporting the efforts of States to address their human rights challenges.

19. During the first cycle of the universal periodic review, Mexico participated in the interactive dialogues of 187 of the 193 States under review. During the second cycle, Mexico participated in all the interactive dialogues.

20. Mexico has advocated for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to be strengthened. It has made proposals on ensuring its effective and autonomous functioning, including through the provision of adequate resources for the execution of its mandate. Mexico makes voluntary annual contributions to the Office of the High Commissioner and to the Voluntary Fund for the Victims of Torture, the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Persons with Disabilities and the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples.

21. On the basis of its commitment to mainstream a human rights perspective into United Nations work in a coherent manner, Mexico was one of the most active proponents of the human rights perspective in the outcomes of the main summits and conferences held recently within the United Nations. In particular, Mexico promoted the mainstreaming of human rights, a gender perspective and the protection of the rights of specific population groups in:

- The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals
- The special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem
- The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, adopted at the high-level plenary meeting on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants.

**Cooperation with international human rights mechanisms, including regional mechanisms**

22. Mexico maintains an open and standing invitation to all international human rights mechanisms. Convinced that its experience and professionalism serve to strengthen the public policy framework and support compliance with international obligations, Mexico has to date (2006-2017) hosted visits from 29 United Nations mechanisms since becoming a member of the Council.

23. In 2015, Mexico received a visit by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in the spirit of openness and cooperation with the Human Rights Council and the Office of the High Commissioner.

24. In addition, since its election to the Council in 2013, Mexico has received the following visits:

(a) Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions (April-May 2013);

(b) Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (April-May 2014);

(c) United Nations Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises (August-September 2016);

(d) Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (December 2016);

(e) United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders (January 2017);

(f) Special Rapporteur on the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation (May 2017).

25. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, and the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression of the Organization of American States will visit Mexico in November 2017.

26. It is worth noting that during the period 2013-2017, Mexico has received five visits from regional human rights mechanisms.[1] The visits have promoted dialogue on the country's progress and challenges in different areas of human rights work, and raised the national profile of human rights matters. The observations and recommendations emerging from these visits help us to strengthen our efforts in those areas of focus.

27. In compliance with its international obligations, Mexico has submitted and defended periodic reports to the treaty bodies. Through these processes, we report on measures to guarantee respect for human rights in the country and identify areas that require increased efforts and focus. In the past few years Mexico has submitted and defended the following reports:

(a) Initial report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (submitted in April 2011; defended in September 2014);

(b) Fourth and fifth periodic reports on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (submitted in July 2012; defended in May 2015);

[1] The Session of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights was held in Mexico (August 2014). Rapporteurs for Mexico and on the Rights of Persons Deprived of Liberty of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (September 2014). Rapporteur on the Rights of the Child of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (October 2014). Rapporteurs for Mexico and on the Rights of Persons Deprived of Liberty of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (September 2015). On-site visit of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (September-October 2015) — Mechanism for following up the precautionary measures put in place by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in relation to the disappearance of 43 students of Raúl Isidro Burgos rural teaching college (November 2016; January 2017; March 2017; April 2017).

(c) Report on the implementation of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (submitted in March 2014; defended in February 2015);

(d) Fifth and sixth periodic reports on follow-up to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (submitted in June 2016; defence scheduled for September 2017);

(e) Ninth periodic report on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (submitted in December 2016; defence scheduled for July 2018);

(f) Third report on the implementation of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (submitted in May 2017 and defended in September 2017);

(g) Eighteenth and twenty-first periodic reports on the implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (submitted in June 2017).

28. In 2017, we expect to submit the following national reports to human rights treaty bodies:

- Sixth follow-up report on the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;
- Seventh report on the implementation of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

29. As an open, pluralistic and democratic society, Mexico considers dialogue and collaboration with civil society indispensable to the processes of promoting and protecting human rights. Accordingly, we have developed mechanisms to ensure the involvement of civil society in the preparation of reports and the follow-up to the observations issued by the treaty bodies.

30. To promote transparency and accessibility of information, Mexico maintains, in collaboration with the Mexico office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Economic Research and Teaching Centre, a recommendations portal where it publishes all the recommendations issued by international and regional human rights mechanisms directed to Mexico.

31. In 2001, at the request of Mexico, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights opened a country office in Mexico. The collaboration between that office and entities of the executive, legislative and judicial branches of Government has been fruitful; together they have developed, inter alia, joint work plans, human rights programmes for the federative entities (the 31 states of the federal republic and Mexico City), legislative harmonization initiatives and indicators. On 22 February 2017, the parties signed an agreement providing for the continuation of the activities of the Office of the High Commissioner in Mexico, with the aim of strengthening their ongoing cooperation and revitalizing their relationship.

32. At the signing of the agreement, the Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Mexico, Luis Videgaray Caso, said: "This ceremony evokes three important reasons for the renewal, which are worth highlighting: first, it is a crucial and tangible step down the right path, the path to protecting and guaranteeing human rights, in accordance with the mandates of our Constitution and the international treaties to which we are a party. Second, it is a clear demonstration of the openness with which Mexico addresses human rights challenges. We unambiguously acknowledge that major work in the field of human rights remains to be done, and we invite international scrutiny, starting with United Nations scrutiny, which is a fundamental means of

achieving the necessary transformation. Third, a critical element of this collaboration is the confidence placed by Mexico in the mechanisms for collective resolution of humanity's problems, and particularly in the multilateral institutions that we have created in the last 70 years."

**Compliance with international obligations and commitments at the national level**

33. Since the constitutional reform of 2011, in Mexico, the standard that provides for the greatest protection of human rights must be applied — whether that is a national standard or one contained in the international treaties to which Mexico is a party. Furthermore, the country's cooperation with the international human rights system contributes to the strengthening of the national normative, institutional and public policy framework.

34. Between 2013-2016, we have focused our human rights work on two major areas:

(a) Harmonization of legislation: there have been over 12 processes for the development, reform or adoption of legislation, in line with the highest human rights standards; these laws concern, inter alia, victim care, education, indigenous peoples' participation, labour rights, discrimination, military justice, electoral participation, the rights of children and adolescents, enforced disappearance, criminal justice and torture (see enclosure 1);

(b) Strengthening of human rights institutions and development of public policies on human rights. We have established criteria for aligning national programmes and actions with indicators from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. We have also developed national plans and programmes, taking into consideration the provisions of the human rights conventions and the recommendations issued by the relevant committees (see enclosure 2).

## III. Pledges and commitments made by Mexico to the promotion and protection of human rights for the period 2018-2020

35. Mexico renews its commitments with regard to strengthening and collaborating with the international system, meeting its international obligations and national implementation. Set out below are its main goals for membership of the Human Rights Council and the specific activities it will carry out during the period 2018-2020.

36. With the aim of strengthening the role of the Human Rights Council as the body that promotes and protects human rights at the international level, Mexico proposes the following actions:

(a) Promote the highest human rights standards, in particular those relating to non-discrimination, the rights of migrants and indigenous peoples, substantive gender equality in law and in practice, privacy, identity, labour and counter-terrorism;

(b) Promote the role of the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms, as well as the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights as facilitators of international cooperation in the areas of human rights, national capacity-building and the sharing of experiences and good practices;

(c) Continue advocating for the objective treatment of human rights situations around the world through an approach that is preventive and based on dialogue, collaboration and capacity-building;

(d) Continue to promote the effectiveness, autonomy and independence of the Office of the High Commissioner and Council mechanisms, and to support budgetary or administrative measures that will help improve their functioning;

(e) Uphold the universal periodic review mechanism as the most effective universal cooperation tool through ongoing dialogue with States and civil society;

(f) Contribute to increasing the impact of Human Rights Council resolutions and decisions on the ground; in other words, help ensure that their qualitative content facilitates their national implementation;

(g) Promote the Council's cooperation with national human rights institutions, non-governmental organizations, civil society, parliaments, the private sector and other international organizations;

(h) Continue to foster interregional dialogue and collaboration within the Council;

37. In order to drive the mainstreaming of human rights in United Nations work and complement the cross-cutting work of United Nations entities in promoting and protecting human rights, Mexico proposes to:

(a) Promote activities that foster cooperation and dialogue between the Human Rights Council and other United Nations bodies, thus avoiding the duplication of effort;

(b) Foster the integration of human rights promotion and protection in United Nations processes as a guiding principle;

(c) Continue to promote the inter-relatedness of the development, security and human rights pillars, and ensure that the Council's work is coordinated with and complements that of the General Assembly and other bodies.

38. In order to maintain the policy of openness and cooperation with international human rights mechanisms, the following actions will be taken:

(a) Establish and/or strengthen inter-institutional collaboration frameworks, in order to follow up on the observations made following visits;

(b) Submit and defend the relevant reports on the implementation of human rights treaties;

(c) Improve the systems for consulting civil society when preparing and defending reports to treaty bodies, and the mechanisms for addressing and following up on the observations issued by treaty bodies;

(d) Establish an inter-agency mechanism to ensure accountability for implementing the recommendations made during the review of Mexico under the universal periodic review, and to analyse challenges and progress in the area of human rights;

(e) Ensure dialogue with and participation of national civil society organizations and independent human rights bodies, in preparation for the third review of Mexico under the universal periodic review.

39. In terms of national consistency with the international human rights system, Mexico will redouble its efforts to incorporate the highest international human rights standards into national policies and implement constitutional reforms effectively by seeking to:

(a) Maintain the highest possible commitment to the protection of journalists and human rights defenders, and strengthen and improve the functioning of the

Journalists and Human Rights Defenders Protection Mechanism by reinforcing its preventive approach;

(b) Promote the adoption of the general law on the prevention of disappearances;

(c) Consolidate gender mainstreaming throughout public policy, in accordance with the national development plan, and continue to advance women and girls' human rights, with particular emphasis on measures to eliminate gender-based violence and eradicate all multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination;

(d) Work to ensure that the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration contributes to a humane vision of migration that is based on respect for the human rights of all migrants, regardless of their migratory status;

(e) Continue designing a national programme on business and human rights, which will strengthen the normative and institutional framework and ensure human rights are upheld by the private sector;

(f) Promote the ratification of regional human rights instruments on protecting the human rights of older persons and eliminating racism, racial discrimination and related intolerance;

(g) Continue designing the national disability information system, whose two main components will be a national register of persons with disabilities and its georeferenced information system;

(h) Continue to provide leadership on the elimination of all forms of violence against women, children and adolescents as a pathfinder country in the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children and to work on the four priorities set out in the road map in order to make progress on the first stage of implementing the Partnership in Mexico;

(i) Follow up as necessary on the recommendations issued by the universal and regional mechanisms.

## Enclosure I

## Action taken on legislative harmonization from 2014 to 2016

- The General Victims Act of January 2013 establishes the National Victim Support System and the Executive Commission for Victim Support and safeguards the rights of victims of crime and human rights violations, in particular their right to assistance, protection, truth, justice and comprehensive reparation. This represents an unprecedented step forward since it compels the three branches and levels of Government to ensure that victims are protected and receive the necessary assistance.

- The constitutional reforms of February 2013 in the area of education guarantee free public education, fully safeguard teachers' labour rights and create a national evaluation system to ensure that education services are of a good quality.

- Regarding the electoral rights of indigenous peoples, a constitutional amendment was enacted on 22 May 2015 to protect the rights of indigenous women and men to vote and be voted for on equal terms, and to have access to and hold the public and popularly elected positions to which they have been elected or appointed. The reform establishes that the political and electoral rights of citizens in municipal elections must under no circumstances be limited by community practices.

- International Labour Organization (ILO) Minimum Age Convention of 1973 (No. 138) has been adopted and national labour law has been reformed. On 13 May 2015, the decree whereby the Convention was adopted was published. In addition, article 123 of the Constitution and the Federal Labour Act have been amended to raise the minimum age for admission to employment.

- On 20 March 2014, several amendments to the Federal Prevention and Elimination of Discrimination Act were published that strengthened the framework protecting the right to non-discrimination and heightened its effective realization. These amendments brought the Act into line with the international human rights treaties ratified by Mexico and with the constitutional reform of June 2011. An obligation was also created to devise and implement equality measures and to take affirmative action in favour of discriminated groups. In addition, enhanced mechanisms were created to ensure that discrimination by individuals or institutions would not go unpunished and to improve the follow-up of public policies and legislative reforms that safeguard equality.

- Article 57 of the Code of Military Justice was amended in 2014 to limit military jurisdiction and ensure that human rights violations committed against civilians are prosecuted in a civilian court, in line with international standards.

- Thanks to the 2014 reform of the political and electoral provisions of article 41 of the Constitution, gender parity among candidates for the Congress of the Union and the local congresses is guaranteed, and women's political rights have been expanded.

- The General Rights of Children and Adolescents Act of December 2014 represents a paradigm shift in the way that the Government protects and promotes the rights of children and adolescents, since it recognizes them as full rights holders in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and coordinates Government action at all levels to protect and promote these rights. It establishes for that purpose a national child and adolescent

protection system and a federal child protection office, together with their equivalents at the state and municipal level.

- A reform of the criminal justice system was approved in 2008 and entered into force in June 2016. This was one of the most profound legal and institutional transformations in Mexican history and it represents a watershed in law enforcement and the administration of justice. Following a constitutional amendment, a transition is under way in criminal procedure terms from an inquisitorial model to an oral, adversarial model, whose principles (trials must be public; both parties must be heard; legal proceedings should take place over as few days as possible, which should be consecutive; and a judge must be present at all times) are enshrined in the Constitution.

- A draft general law on enforced disappearance was introduced by the executive branch in the Congress of the Union in December 2015. It was drafted through a broad three-stage consultation process in which citizens, civil society organizations and the federative entities participated, and was supported by the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Mexico office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The draft law was approved by the Senate in May 2017 and is being debated by the Chamber of Deputies. It will enable a new public policy to be formulated on searching for and locating missing persons.

- The General Prevention, Investigation and Punishment of Torture Crimes Act was introduced by the executive branch in Congress in December 2015 and approved in May 2017. Its aim is to align the definition of the crime of torture in the 32 federative entities with international standards. It also proposes the creation of the following entities:

  (a) Specialized investigation units at the federal level and in the federative entities to combat this crime more effectively;

  (b) A national prevention mechanism comprising the National Human Rights Commission and the state ombudspersons, with participation from representatives of international organizations, civil society, academics and experts;

  (c) A national register of crimes of torture and other inhuman or degrading treatment, comprising the databases of the Office of the Attorney General and local attorneys-general.

## Enclosure 2

## Action taken on human rights in the areas of institution-building and public policymaking from 2013 to 2016

The 2014-2018 National Human Rights Programme is the national guiding instrument on human rights and the national programmes and activities of each Secretary of State (Ministry) must be aligned with it. The programme was designed bearing in mind the recommendations made to Mexico by the National Human Rights Commission, the inter-American human rights system and United Nations mechanisms, including the universal periodic review.

- The programme makes it mandatory to systematize human rights information in order to strengthen public policy and specifically states that the indicators methodology of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights must be used. Work is under way to implement the methodology and that of the Organization of American States in order to develop a national system for evaluating the fulfilment of human rights. A strategic partnership has been formed with the National Autonomous University of Mexico, the Office of the High Commissioner and the National Human Rights Commission.

- Furthermore, Mexico has developed a variety of programmes on specific human rights issues. The 2013-2018 National Programme for Equal Opportunity and Non-Discrimination against Women was designed taking into account the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the general recommendations formulated by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, as well as its 2012 concluding observations on Mexico. The 2014-2018 National Programme for Equality and Non-Discrimination aims to incorporate, adapt and strengthen the anti-discrimination policy of Mexico on the basis of article 1 of the Constitution. The National Child and Adolescent Protection Programme and the National Programme to Prevent and Eradicate Child Labour and Protect Adolescent Workers of Legal Working Age aim to safeguard children's human rights, ensure their voices are heard when decisions are made that affect them, eradicate child labour and protect adolescent workers of legal working age. The 2014-2018 National Programme for the Advancement and Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities promotes the inclusion of persons with disabilities in education, health and employment and harmonizes legislation to facilitate their access to justice and their participation in public and political life. The 2014-2018 Special Migration Programme coordinates the action taken by Mexico to comprehensively address international migration.

- The 2014-2018 National Programme for the Social Prevention of Violence and Delinquency seeks, among other goals, to incorporate a human rights perspective into public security policy. The Government of Mexico will continue to strengthen its capacity to ensure public security while complying fully with international human rights standards.

- On 19 August 2015, the standardized protocol for searching for missing persons and investigating enforced disappearances and the standardized protocol for investigating the crime of torture entered into force. Used by attorneys general and prosecutors throughout the country, they align the criteria for criminal investigations with national and international standards and recommendations and provide guidance on the different stages of an investigation. The aim is to avoid secondary victimization and to formulate

strategies on the correct and immediate action to be taken when faced with such acts.

- In October 2015, the Office of the Special Prosecutor for the Search for Missing Persons was established, which is responsible for leading, coordinating and overseeing missing person investigations. It was set up in response to various international recommendations made to Mexico.

- The protocol on consular assistance for unaccompanied migrant children and adolescents (presented in May 2015) is a tool for conducting consular interviews. It helps to provide minors with comprehensive and individualized assistance, so as to be able to assess their best interests, identify possible situations of risk in a timely manner and take protection measures that safeguard each of their rights. It was designed in conjunction with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

- The protocol on protecting the rights of children and adolescents during migration procedures and upholding the related principles was published in August 2016. It aims to protect the rights of accompanied and unaccompanied children and adolescents when they are involved in administrative migration procedures and uphold the related principles.

- The national transparency system was established in May 2015 by means of the General Transparency and Access to Public Information Act. This law provides for a comprehensive, organized and coordinated public policy to ensure that the rights of access to information and protection of personal data are effectively exercised and upheld by fostering education and civic culture in these two rights throughout the country.

- The national anti-corruption system, enacted in May 2015, coordinates social actors and different levels of government in the prevention, investigation and punishment of corruption. It increases the oversight powers of the Supreme Federal Audit Office to carry out real-time audits and to audit federal resources allocated to states and municipalities that are used by trusts, funds and public and private mandates. Under the national transparency system, firms that receive public funds must abide by transparency requirements and criminal penalties may be imposed for corruption.

- The Criminal Investigation Unit for Migrants and the Mechanism for Mexican Support Abroad in Search and Investigation Activities was created in December 2015 to enable migrants to uncover the facts and to seek protection and reparation. The unit is authorized to investigate crimes committed by and against migrants and to search for missing migrants.

- The National System for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, created in May 2016, aims to coordinate and monitor public and private inter-institutional programmes, action and mechanisms that implement public policies for the development and inclusion of persons with disabilities.

- The functioning of the Journalists and Human Rights Defenders Protection Mechanism was improved in three stages: (1) in collaboration with Freedom House, the mechanism's internal procedures and methodology were analysed to address the delay in assessing cases and to increase efficiency by strengthening its risk assessment capacity; (2) the effectiveness of protection measures was improved and a gender perspective was incorporated into risk analyses; in addition, training was provided to the governing board, the staff of the intake, rapid response and risk assessment units, and to human rights defenders and journalists; (3) a prevention unit was created and guidelines were established for its operation.

- On 17 May 2017, the President of the Republic committed to strengthening the structure and budget of the mechanism and the Office of the Special Prosecutor for Crimes against Freedom of Expression and to establishing a national system for coordination with the states together with a protocol for its operation.

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Agenda item 73
**Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance**

# Safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel

## Report of the Secretary-General

*Summary*

The present report was prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 71/129 and provides an overview of the global security environment, current security threats and their impact on United Nations personnel and the United Nations response to those challenges. The report contains an analysis of emerging security trends and their implications for United Nations personnel. It highlights the efforts of the Department of Safety and Security to respond to the rising demand for security services. The report concludes with observations and recommendations for consideration by the Assembly.

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# I. Introduction

1. In resolution 71/129, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Assembly, at its seventy-second session, a comprehensive and updated report on the safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel and on the implementation of the resolution. It also requested that the Secretary-General include in his report an assessment of the impact of safety and security risks on such personnel and of the development, implementation and outcomes of policies, strategies and initiatives of the United Nations system in the field of safety and security.

2. The present report covers the 18-month period from January 2016 to June 2017. It gives an overview of the global security environment, current security threats, risks and challenges facing United Nations personnel,[1] the Organization's response to those threats and the strategic challenges faced by the Organization, and concludes with proposals for ways forward.

# II. Security threats against United Nations personnel

## A. Global security environment

3. The global security environment has become increasingly complex. It is unlikely to improve in the near future while the overall social, political and economic factors underpinning insecurity persist.

4. Although millions of people have been lifted out of poverty, tempering the socioeconomic conditions in which instability thrives, the number of conflicts is on the rise and they are lasting longer. This has had a devastating impact on civilian populations, which have been affected by violence, widespread destruction of infrastructure and loss of essential services, and has contributed to the greatest global migration crisis since the Second World War. By the end of 2016, some 130 million people required emergency assistance for their survival and protection, almost 200 per cent more than a decade earlier.[2]

5. A lack of political solutions, fuelled by deep international or regional divisions has continued to worsen the security conditions in protracted conflicts. In some areas, food insecurity and natural disasters have had an impact on communities that were already vulnerable, owing to poverty, isolation or inequality. Today, armed conflict, terrorism and organized crime are increasingly interconnected, while political discontent continues to manifest itself in civil unrest, creating multifaceted and complex threats. In conflict areas, humanitarian personnel are facing severe constraints, including restrictions on movement, intimidation and direct attacks through aerial bombing or indiscriminate firing in complete disregard of the fundamental tenets of international humanitarian law. The level of violence

[1] For the purposes of the present report, the term "United Nations personnel" refers to all personnel covered by the United Nations security management system, including United Nations system personnel, United Nations Volunteers, individually deployed military and police personnel in peacekeeping or special political missions, consultants, individual contractors, experts on mission and other officials with a direct contractual agreement with an organization of the United Nations system. The term does not refer to military members of national contingents or members of formed police units when deployed with their contingent. According to the database of the United Nations Security Managers Information Network, the United Nations security management system is responsible for approximately 180,000 personnel.

[2] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, annual report 2016, available from www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/2016ochaannualreport.pdf.

affecting medical personnel and facilities has been particularly alarming (see S/2017/414). These factors are placing an extraordinary strain on the United Nations and on the humanitarian community to conduct operations and deliver programmes to provide relief and support in dangerous and complex environments.

6. In addition, new areas of the world have been affected by dramatic security developments. In South America, violent protests took place amid deteriorating economic conditions, and some countries also registered a spike in violent crime. In Western Europe, a string of terrorist attacks revealed the durable nature of the extremist threat, exacerbated by inequality and ideology. In West Africa, while political and institutional reforms have improved the environment, creating the conditions for the departure of peacekeeping missions, the region remains fragile and susceptible to extremist attacks, as demonstrated in Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire. Extremist groups continue to target vulnerable areas where government control remains unsteady, creating new demands in remote places, such as the Lake Chad basin. In some areas of South-East Asia, domestic and transnational violent extremist groups have maintained a firm foothold, while protracted local conflicts continue to translate into the movement of populations amid the threat of natural disasters.

7. Despite setbacks, extremist groups maintain a broad operational reach around the world as they adapt to international pressure. Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), Al-Qaida and their affiliates continue to pose an acute threat globally. Al-Shabaab and Boko Haram remain serious regional threats in parts of Africa despite sustained military operations. While ISIL recently lost significant territorial control, it has demonstrated resilience by moving fighters to other areas of conflict or returning them to their countries of origin and through the blurring of associations between groups. This manifested itself in multiple terror attacks in a number of countries in Europe and Africa. The attacks carried out in places of worship or other public spaces or populated venues, such as streets, health facilities, hotels, concert halls, subways and airports, were aimed at maximizing casualty numbers and stoking fear locally and globally. While some of those attacks were of a sophisticated nature, many were not, and yet had a significant impact, as terrorist groups encouraged their followers to employ a wide range of methods, including using knives, ramming vehicles into pedestrians, carrying out office intrusions and armed assaults, detonating vehicle-borne and person-borne improvised explosive devices, kidnapping and hostage-taking.

8. In a concerning development, ISIL recently resumed inciting its followers, through its propaganda, to carry out attacks on international diplomatic facilities and staff. While there had been a notable lack of propaganda against the United Nations between 2009 and 2016, ISIL has re-established the Organization as a target through its social media outlets.

## B. Security incidents affecting the United Nations security management system[3]

### 1. Types of incidents and their impact on United Nations personnel

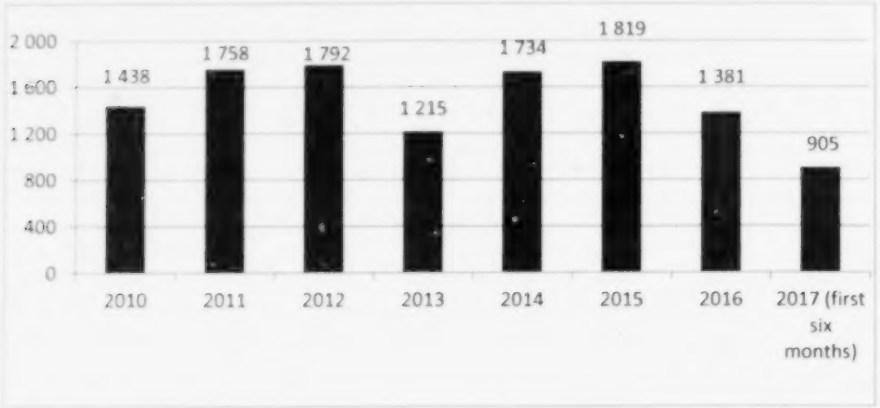
*Direct attacks against United Nations personnel, premises and assets*

9. Overall, incidents related to security and safety affected 1,381 United Nations personnel in 2016, compared with 1,819 in 2015 (see figure I). This figure was

[3] The United Nations security management system comprises all United Nations system organizations and other international organizations that have signed a memorandum of understanding with the United Nations for the purposes of security.

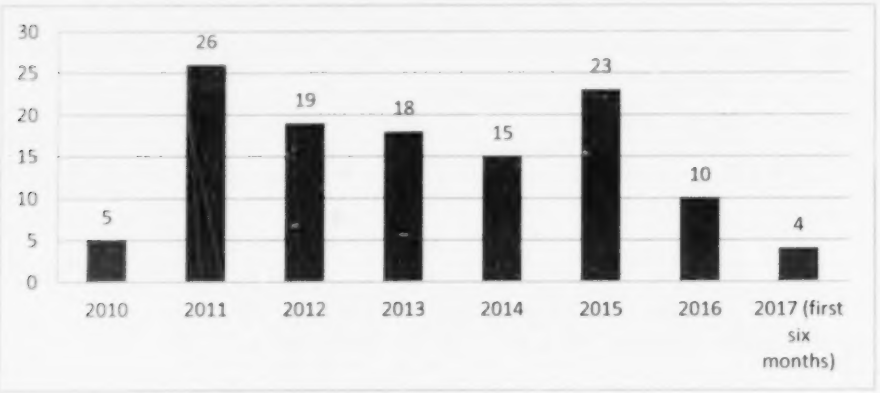
lower than the average number of personnel affected annually over the period from 2010 to 2016 (1,591).

Figure I
**United Nations personnel affected by safety and security incidents**




10. A total of 10 United Nations civilian personnel lost their lives as a result of direct acts of violence in 2016, compared with 23 in 2015 (see figure II). Seventy United Nations personnel were injured as a result of acts of violence in 2016, compared with 99 in 2015, which is the lowest figure for United Nations civilian casualties in the past five years (see annex I), despite an increased number of United Nations personnel operating in complex security environments. However, in the first six months of 2017, four United Nations personnel, including two members of a group of experts, lost their lives as a result of violence.

Figure II
**United Nations personnel fatalities as a result of violence**

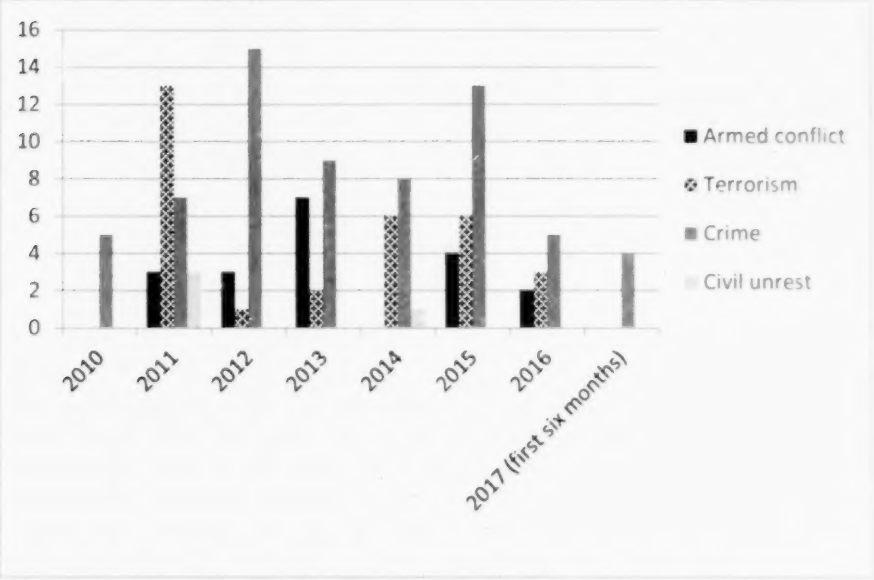



11. In contrast, the number of direct attacks against United Nations premises increased substantially in 2016. There were 56 attacks against United Nations premises in 2016, compared with 35 in 2015. Those attacks took place mainly in the Central African Republic, Haiti, Mali and South Sudan. In addition, the number of attacks against United Nations official vehicles remained high, with 146 in 2016, compared with 155 in 2015 (see annex II). The majority of those attacks occurred in Afghanistan, the Sudan (Darfur) and Yemen.

12. The decrease in United Nations casualties despite a high rate of attacks and continued insecurity is a positive development. In January 2016, an explosion adjacent to United Nations accommodation in Kabul was the deadliest attack in that city since 2011. However, notwithstanding the major infrastructure impact, there were no serious injuries among United Nations personnel. In June 2017, in Libya, a rocket-propelled grenade was launched at a United Nations convoy. No casualties were sustained thanks to the use of armoured vehicles and the timely application of immediate response procedures. While many factors play a role, these examples show the growing effectiveness of security policies, measures and procedures. Although this progress may be tenuous and reversed easily, it validates the importance of the collective efforts made by United Nations system organizations to strengthen the key aspects of security management.

13. In 2016, crime remained the main cause of security-related fatalities and injuries among United Nations personnel. Of the 10 fatalities due to violence in 2016, five personnel lost their lives as a result of criminal acts, three were killed in extremist attacks and two lost their lives as a result of armed conflict (see figure III and annex III).

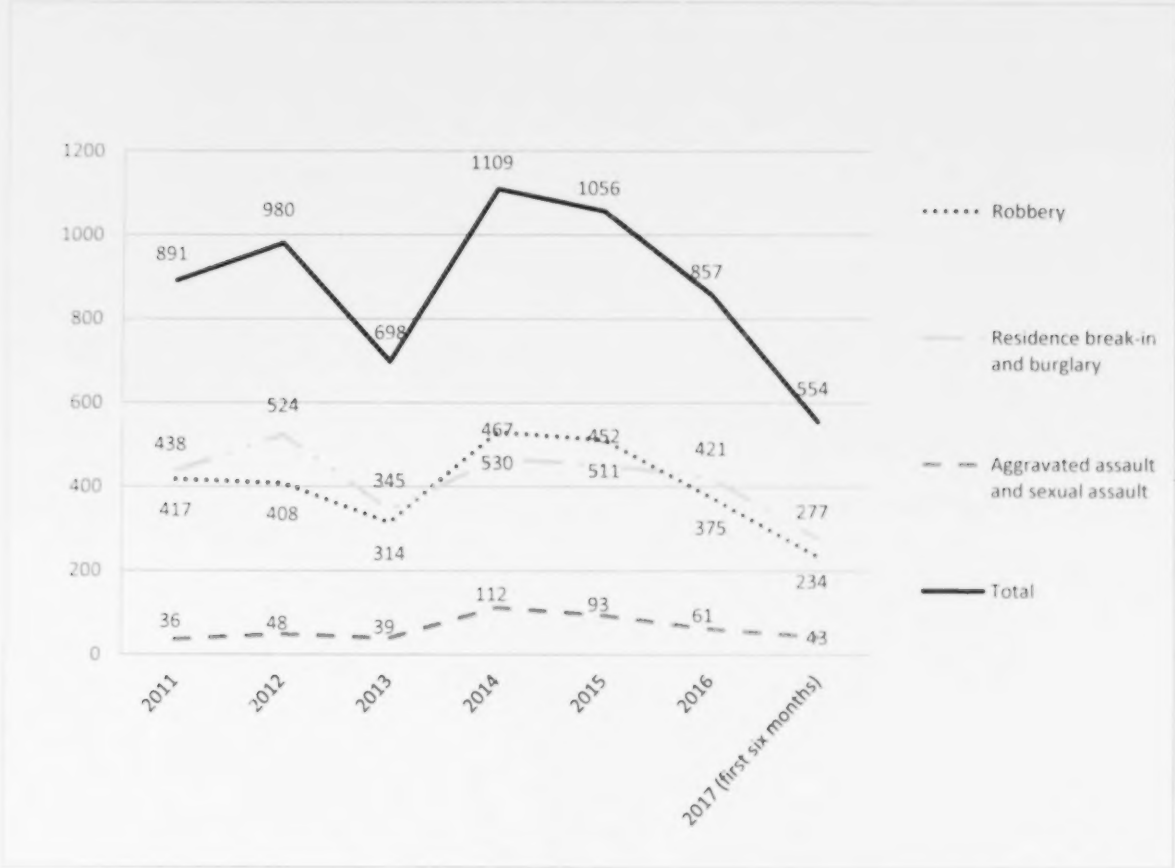
Figure III
**United Nations personnel fatalities by category of threat**




*Crime*

14. Although the number of criminal acts targeting United Nations personnel has decreased steadily since 2014 (see figure IV), crime continues to be the main cause of personnel fatalities resulting from acts of violence. In the past five years, an average of 57 per cent of United Nations personnel fatalities was attributable to violent crimes. From January to June 2017, 554 personnel reported being affected directly by crime, which suggests that the figure for the whole year will be similar to that for 2016.

Figure IV
**United Nations personnel affected by crime, by category**




15. Of the 1,381 United Nations personnel affected by security incidents in 2016, 857 (62 per cent) were victims of criminal acts: robberies, residence break-ins, burglaries and aggravated and sexual assault (see figure IV and annex III). In areas of high criminality, designated officials can apply residential security measures for their international personnel. In addition, the Inter-Agency Security Management Network completed a review of the residential security provisions of locally recruited personnel and made recommendations to support them through training and assessments.

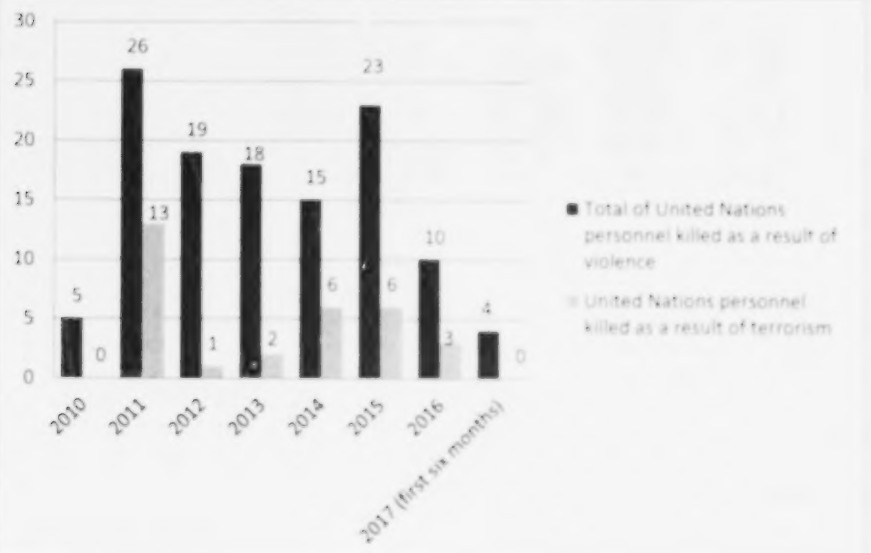
*Terrorism*

16. In the past five years, the number of United Nations personnel fatalities resulting from terrorist violence has held steady. Casualties resulting from terrorism were down to three in 2016, with fatalities occurring in Côte d'Ivoire and Somalia. During the first six months of 2017, there were no reported deaths of United Nations personnel as a result of terrorism. A single security incident, however, can dramatically reverse such a trend, as demonstrated in Abuja in 2011 (see figure V).

17. One member of United Nations personnel was killed and another injured in an attack in Côte d'Ivoire on 13 March 2016 that claimed the lives of 18 people. In June 2016, an attack using a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device launched by a member of Al-Shabaab at a restaurant in Mogadishu resulted in the deaths of

15 people, including one locally recruited member of United Nations personnel. United Nations personnel were also present during attacks in Mali on 18 June 2017 and in Burkina Faso on 15 January 2016, but escaped uninjured.

Figure V
**United Nations personnel fatalities resulting from terrorism**

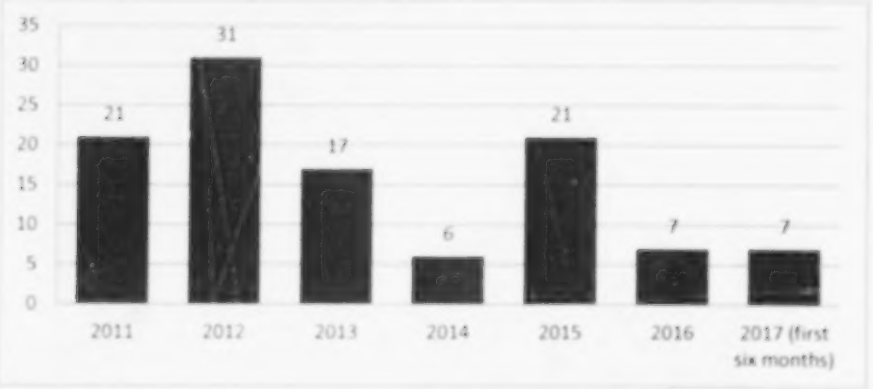



18. In a worrying development, complex attacks with multiple vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices are being combined with increasing loads of explosives. In July 2016, two such devices were detonated in close proximity to the international airport in Mogadishu, resulting in the death of one member of United Nations personnel and injuries to two others. In May 2017, a vehicle containing a large amount of explosives killed some 90 people and destroyed buildings in the diplomatic quarter in Kabul. The United Nations premises withstood the attack as a result of the security enhancement that had been carried out after an incident at the compound of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Kabul in January 2016. Continuous investment in physical security measures, multidimensional risk-management measures, threat analysis and training are indispensable to continue to prevent and lessen the impact of terrorist violence, which is constantly evolving.

*Abduction of United Nations personnel*

19. In 2016, seven United Nations personnel were victims of abduction incidents that developed into hostage situations (see figure VI), representing a substantial decrease compared with 2015, when 21 personnel were abducted. Five of the seven United Nations personnel abducted in 2016 were locally recruited and all were men. In the first six months of 2017, seven personnel were abducted, which indicates that the total number of abductions in 2017 may be higher than in 2016.

Figure VI
**Abductions of United Nations personnel**




20. The Department of Safety and Security, together with the United Nations security management system organizations, continues to make efforts to prevent abductions through enhanced security-risk management. The United Nations has established policies in cases of abduction, which include negotiations and denying ransom payments to captors. The release of hostages is attributed to the hostage management capacity established within the United Nations security management system and to the support of Member States.

*Intimidation and harassment*

21. During the past five years, the number of incidents of intimidation and harassment of United Nations personnel peaked in 2015. Since then, the number has been decreasing steadily, from 405 reported cases in 2015 to 231 in 2016 (see annex I). This may be attributed to the decrease in incidents linked to the initial deployment of peace missions to new areas, which is when most such incidents take place.

*Safety-related incidents and road traffic incidents*

22. In 2016, 11 United Nations personnel lost their lives and 93 were injured as a result of safety-related incidents, compared with 16 and 130 in 2015, respectively (see annex I). Of those, 9 United Nations personnel were killed and 86 were injured in road traffic accidents (see annex III). Three United Nations personnel lost their lives in accidents involving official United Nations vehicles and six died in traffic accidents involving the use of private vehicles and public transportation.[4] Of the 86 personnel who were injured in road traffic accidents, 19 were in incidents involving official United Nations vehicles and 67 were in incidents involving private vehicles and public transportation.

23. In addition, 42 persons not affiliated with the United Nations died and 371 others were injured as a result of traffic accidents involving United Nations vehicles. The United Nations has developed an internal road safety strategy, which is aimed at reducing the number of road traffic accidents by 50 per cent by 2020, in line with the objectives of the Decade of Action for Road Safety.

[4] Of the nine reported fatalities as a result of road traffic accidents, two United Nations personnel died in safety-related incidents while on private travel, including one staff member who died in an aviation accident.

*Arrest and detention of United Nations personnel*

24. In 2016, 102 United Nations personnel were arrested and detained by national authorities of Member States, compared with 69 in 2015 (see annex I). This represents a significant increase of 48 per cent. A further 53 personnel were arrested during the first six months of 2017. At the time of reporting, 29 United Nations personnel remained in detention. Most of the arrests were related to violations of national laws, including road traffic violations.

*Gender-related security incidents*

25. Female personnel represent approximately 40 per cent of all United Nations personnel in the field. In 2016, female United Nations personnel accounted for 37 per cent of all security incidents (see annex III), indicating that security incidents affect male and female personnel in an almost equal proportion. There was a marked rise in the number of sexual assaults of United Nations personnel recorded in 2016 (17) and the first six months of 2017 (19). The majority of personnel affected by sexual assault in 2016 were women (71 per cent).

26. In view of the rising number of reported incidents of sexual harassment and sexual violence, the United Nations security management system and broader humanitarian and development community continued to take action to address the prevalence of sexual harassment and violence in the working environment and foster the conditions for the reporting of such incidents. There were no reported incidents affecting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex personnel. Training for security officers is beginning to improve their knowledge and capacity to identify these types of crimes and the particular vulnerabilities that such personnel may experience in some areas.

### 2. Security of locally recruited United Nations personnel

27. Locally recruited personnel comprise 66 per cent of the United Nations personnel affected by safety and security incidents. While their larger presence in the field, as compared with internationally recruited personnel, has traditionally explained the larger number of incidents affecting them, in 2016, both internationally and locally recruited personnel faced a similar ratio of attacks. In 2016, 90 per cent of the United Nations personnel who were killed were locally recruited. They were also affected to a greater extent than their internationally recruited colleagues by arrest and detention, abduction and assault. International personnel were, however, affected to a greater extent than locally recruited personnel by burglary, residence break-in, intimidation, harassment and robbery. The United Nations needs to take a system-wide approach to supporting the specific needs of locally recruited personnel.

### 3. Impact of the global security environment on United Nations programmes

28. The perilous security environment challenges the organizations of the United Nation system in a variety of ways. First and foremost, it places serious pressure on the United Nations personnel who are based in dangerous locations and their families. In the past five years, the number of non-family duty stations increased by almost 30 per cent, while the number of locations with danger pay increased by more than 40 per cent. United Nations personnel have to demonstrate incredible resilience as they are exposed to physical, medical and psychosocial challenges. This is especially true for locally recruited personnel, who are, in some cases, particularly exposed, while ensuring the continuity of United Nations programmes.

29. The present security environment has driven up security costs, putting pressure on budgets, which have already been tightened. While there has been a steady increase in donor funding for humanitarian assistance, commensurate with the unprecedented humanitarian needs across the globe, funding for security remains inadequate. Security funding should be considered part of programme delivery costs, not an administrative overhead, in order to ensure that there are adequate security resources to enable programme delivery in environments with elevated security risks.

30. Lastly, in response to the insecure environment, there is a need for innovative and effective approaches to security management and a collective approach by the United Nations security management system. This requires mainstreaming of security within programmes and the consistent involvement of United Nations staff and managers at all levels in security-related issues. It also requires a permanent and delicate balancing act between security risks and critical programmes. There is no simple remedy for a complex and dynamic security environment.

31. Despite these challenges, the United Nations finds ways to deliver in the most dangerous places. In conflict areas, the United Nations security management system has enabled programme delivery in capital cities, regional hubs and field offices. In Libya, where the United Nations is now preparing for the full return of United Nations personnel, more than 400 field missions have been facilitated to areas of high risk. In remote areas where populations are in dire need of assistance, the World Food Programme has airdropped humanitarian supplies and developed a land and air rapid response mechanism to deliver aid in unstable environments.

*Case study 1: Iraq*

32. At the end of 2016, the United Nations was called upon to facilitate the return of civilians to the areas of Iraq formerly controlled by ISIL. The United Nations and its implementing partners conducted critical humanitarian operations and stabilization programmes, which allowed for the return of over 250,000 civilians. Nevertheless, more than 800,000 people who left Mosul after military operations began in October 2016 remain displaced. With the establishment of a humanitarian support cell in Erbil, the United Nations conducted more than 370 field missions, including 312 in high-risk and 58 in very high-risk areas in Mosul. The support cell focuses on supporting life-saving interventions, facilitating humanitarian access and rapid stabilization efforts, coordinating with host government security focal points and securing camps and emergency sites.

*Case study 2: northern Nigeria*

33. The humanitarian crisis in north-eastern Nigeria was among the world's largest in 2016, with several million people threatened by insecurity and a food crisis. More than 500 United Nations personnel are now deployed in Maiduguri, the epicentre of the crisis, to support the opening of five humanitarian hubs at satellite locations. This presence was maintained without interruption despite a complex attack on the city on 7 June 2017 and the doubling of the suicide bombing rate since March. The security of the humanitarian surge deployment personnel was achieved only through humanitarian funding that provided additional security professionals and equipment.

## C. Security incidents affecting humanitarian personnel and other United Nations personnel

### 1. Impact of security threats on humanitarian personnel and non-governmental organizations

34. From January 2016 to June 2017, 51 personnel of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in close cooperation with the United Nations lost their lives as a result of acts of violence, and 145 were abducted, according to reports received by the Department of Safety and Security (see annex IV). The number of casualties increased from 41 fatalities in the previous reporting period.

35. According to the reports received, 77 NGO personnel were injured as a result of acts of violence in the reporting period, slightly fewer than in the previous period (82). A worrying upsurge in attacks on NGO vehicles seemed to continue, with 251 personnel reporting incidents of attacks on their vehicles, a slight increase from 230 reported incidents in the previous reporting period. This figure, however, is almost double the number of incidents in 2014 (129).

### 2. Security incidents affecting area personnel of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

36. Employing over 30,000 area personnel in five fields of operation, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) delivers a range of humanitarian assistance to 5.3 million Palestine refugees. In 2016, there was a slight increase in the number of UNRWA area personnel affected by security incidents (205, compared with 192 in 2015), with a rising proportion of the incidents resulting from interactions with dissatisfied beneficiaries (see annex V). Critical incidents took place in two of the five fields of operation, with four personnel fatalities as a result of violence and one member of personnel reported missing in 2016. There were no fatalities for the first half of 2017.

37. UNRWA area personnel are not covered by the United Nations security management system and, therefore, the security incidents that affected them are not included in the overall statistics contained in the present report. However, the number of security incidents involving UNRWA personnel is given separately to complete the overall description of the security environment for United Nations operations.

### 3. Comparison with peacekeepers

38. Peacekeepers[*] serving in United Nations missions, often on the front line of conflict, face similar types of threats to those encountered by United Nations civilian personnel. A total of 31 fatalities were recorded among peacekeepers in 2016, the same number as in 2015. The number of incidents almost doubled, with 186 incidents recorded in 2016, compared with 97 in 2015. Therefore, even though the number of fatalities held steady, the rate of casualties per incident fell, in a trend similar to the one observed during the reporting period for United Nations civilian personnel.

39. Across all 16 peacekeeping operations, the gravest threats to the security of peacekeepers included armed incidents, improvised explosive devices, landmines, explosive remnants of war, suicide attacks, ambushes, indirect fire and abductions.

[*] Peacekeepers are personnel of contingent troops and formed police units. They are not covered by the United Nations security management system.

# III. Strengthening the security management system

40. To meet the challenges of operating in the complex and unpredictable global security environment, the Department of Safety and Security strives to enable the United Nations to conduct mandated programmes and activities safely and efficiently. In 2017, the Department has taken measures to enhance security risk management and strengthen support for field operations, with enhanced external and internal collaboration.

## A. Enhancing security risk-management capacity for security decision makers

### 1. Strengthening security risk decisions

41. The programme criticality framework is a key aspect of decision-making on security risks, as reflected in General Assembly resolution 71/129. The framework allows for informed decisions on acceptable risk and enables the delivery of critical United Nations programmes in environments with a high threat level. In October 2016, the High-level Committee on Management approved the revised programme criticality framework as a United Nations system-wide policy. Its application is now mandatory in settings of high or very high security risk. The United Nations carried out programme criticality assessments and reviews in 22 countries during the reporting period.

### 2. Enhanced support to designated officials

42. In 2016, under the auspices of the Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security, 110 designated officials, together with their senior security advisers and representatives of United Nations system organizations, participated in five regional workshops to enhance their understanding of the security policies and address operational concerns and challenges. The Department revised the handbook for designated officials, first issued in 2012, which offers practical, comprehensive and updated advice. In 2016, a total of 1,695 United Nations personnel involved in security decision-making completed the online Security Management Team course.

## B. Reinforcing security risk-management strategies and the policy framework to enable United Nations operations in the field

### 1. Reinforcing the framework of safety and security policies

43. The Inter-Agency Security Management Network continues to strengthen the regulatory framework to guide and support security operations, policy development and decision-making for the United Nations security management system. During the reporting period, the Inter-Agency Security Management Network endorsed four security policies and eight guidelines. Among those, it approved amendments to the security risk management guidance to clarify the adoption and implementation of the security risk management measures and to replace the policy on minimum operating security standards.

44. In addition, United Nations security management system organizations completed the development of a United Nations system-wide approach to promote road safety in June 2017. Building on the Decade of Action for Road Safety (2011-2020), the appointment of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Road Safety and the adoption of General Assembly resolution 70/260, the Inter-Agency Security Management Network endorsed a comprehensive road safety strategy

applicable to the entire United Nations system, with the support of specialists from the medical, fleet management and human resources sectors.

### 2. Effective use of specific security risk-management measures

45. In the light of increased attacks on United Nations premises worldwide, the physical security of United Nations premises is assessed and strengthened through the United Nations security management system, including for the protection of United Nations Headquarters, offices away from Headquarters, regional commissions and tribunals. During the reporting period, the Department conducted 26 physical security assessments and provided operational guidance for 59 specific United Nations locations. The Department conducted two specific training programmes on physical security and a third is scheduled to be held before the end of 2017 to enhance knowledge of physical security components and systems. All the relevant information, including lessons learned and best practices, is now accessible online.

46. In addition, the United Nations security management system invested in the protection of road movements through the acquisition of armoured vehicles. In the past five years, the Department has almost doubled the fleet of armoured vehicles, from 63 to 114 in 2017.

### 3. Training

47. Security training and raising awareness of security-related issues remain critical to further promoting a security culture among United Nations personnel. In collaboration with United Nations security management system organizations, the Department continues to develop training for all United Nations personnel and specific courses for security professionals and security decisions makers. Efforts are under way to develop an overarching training strategy. The Department is evaluating all training needs and identifying innovative, cost-efficient and sustainable methods to meet the high demand for training within limited resources.

48. The mandatory Basic Security in the Field and Advanced Security in the Field courses remain the fundamental security training required for all United Nations personnel. Each month, the Department generates an average of 10,000 certificates for these courses. For those operating in high-risk environments, the Safe and Secure Approaches in Field Environments programme is an essential risk-management measure. Since its inception in 2007, more than 62,400 United Nations personnel have received the training through 2,325 courses run at 66 duty stations.

49. During the reporting period, a total of 888 security professionals attended face-to-face security training programmes, often delivered in collaboration with United Nations organizations. A total of 864 United Nations personnel completed the course for first responders on using the emergency trauma bag.

### 4. Enhancing situational awareness and threat and risk analysis

50. Improving United Nations situational awareness and threat and risk analysis remains a core priority of the Department to address the dynamic and erratic security environment. The Department has undertaken specific steps to improve its analytical services to the United Nations security management system. In 2017, within its existing resources, the Department initiated a project to consolidate data collected by United Nations system entities to enhance strategic forecasting and data visualization. In September 2017, the Department will commence a comprehensive training initiative on strategic analysis warning techniques, which will focus on early warning and analysis of violent and unstable environments for senior decision makers. In order to improve the quality of analysis in relation to

specific threats, the Department has published guidance on security analysis process and practice, which is accessible to all security professionals.

## C. Flexibility and efficiency in support of United Nations field operations

### 1. Surge deployments and internal realignments

51. The Department continued to use surge deployments to meet a rise in demand to support operations and programmes worldwide and to respond to rapidly evolving crisis situations. In response to security emergencies and crises globally, the Department deployed 50 surge officers to 19 countries, for a total of 5,500 days in 2016, and 51 surge officers to 14 countries, for a total of 4,300 days in the first six months of 2017. This is almost a 10-fold increase over surge deployment in 2014.

52. Given its coverage of more than 170 countries, the Department is constantly reviewing the deployment of personnel to fit the needs of the operations, taking into account their complexity. Between 2014 and 2017, 72 security posts (24 per cent of the total field capacity) were reassigned. In 2017, following a comprehensive study, six new redeployments were decided upon and additional medium-term measures were recommended, including the further regionalization of positions and the establishment of national security positions. Although, to date, the Department has successfully met increased demand and responded to crises through efficiency and flexibility, the growing demand far outstrips the existing resource capacity and the current situation is therefore not sustainable over the longer term.

### 2. Integration of the security resources of the Secretariat

53. The integration of the security resources of the Secretariat remains a top priority and great progress has been made in that regard. The Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security, who has the primary management responsibility for the safety and security personnel and assets of peacekeeping operations and special political missions, is establishing benchmarks and standards for all Secretariat safety and security operations. Efforts are under way to facilitate an integrated security job network, in which all Secretariat safety and security personnel will operate within the same policy and administrative framework. Significant milestones have included the development of guidelines and interdepartmental guidance on the operational control and management of protective services in March 2017. Moreover, the Department has conducted a review of policies and procedures relating to protective services to ensure the smooth integration of protection officers and protective operations. The integration programme is expected to be completed in early 2018.

### 3. Human resources strategy for security personnel

54. In line with the management reform spearheaded by the Secretary-General, the Department launched its human resources strategy in July 2017. The strategy outlines the Department's plan to further strengthen security management capacity by enhancing the skills and expertise of its workforce to fit the changing security environment while ensuring effectiveness and efficiency. The strategy highlights the organizational culture and values that underpin the Department and its workforce, the career paths available, the core skills required at each level and for each category of personnel and the measures in place to support the professional development of its personnel.

### 4. Strengthening evaluation, best practices and compliance

55. In 2016, the Department developed new guidance on capturing lessons learned and best practices and made it available to all organizations of the United Nations system. The Department issued case studies on lessons learned from protective operations for non-United Nations officials and crisis management in integrated mission settings.

56. The Department also established an evaluation framework based on the norms and standards issued by the United Nations Evaluation Group[6] and conducted three evaluations of United Nations security programmes, identifying issues and making recommendations to improve processes and outcomes.

57. Recognizing that compliance with security policies is a fundamental requirement for the efficiency of the security management system, the Department called upon all United Nations systems organizations to ensure compliance with security decisions. In addition, the Inter-Agency Security Management Network is developing a comprehensive policy for a robust system for managing compliance.

## D. Building external collaboration and enhancing internal coordination

### 1. Enhancing security collaboration between the United Nations and host Governments

58. Constructive relationships and engagement with host Governments remain key components of the United Nations security management system in view of the primary responsibility of host Governments for providing security and protection to United Nations personnel, premises and assets. The Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security met host government authorities to ensure close collaboration through the sharing of situational awareness and threat and risk analysis, the coordination of prevention and risk mitigation measures and the management of security crises. In ensuring the security of United Nations Headquarters, offices away from Headquarters, regional commissions and tribunals, the Department coordinates closely with host country authorities on the protection of these premises. The Department coordinated 257 special events outside United Nations premises and ensured the security and safety of more than 177,000 participants in those events in close coordination with host government authorities.

### 2. Combating impunity and promoting respect for the human rights, privileges and immunities of United Nations and associated personnel

59. The United Nations continued to make every effort to engage host Governments in protecting United Nations personnel deployed on their territories and ensuring respect for the privileges and immunities of United Nations personnel. The Organization continues to encourage Member States to abide by relevant international instruments. To date, 93 States are parties to the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel of 1994 and the Optional Protocol thereto of 2005. In addition, the Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security visited 21 countries and held meetings with relevant security authorities. The Department is exploring ways to further strengthen cooperation with Member States on the protection of United Nations personnel.

60. In 2017, the Department of Safety and Security, in collaboration with other departments and offices of the Secretariat, finalized the internal mechanism

[6] The United Nations Evaluation Group is an inter-agency network that brings together the evaluation units of United Nations system organizations and affiliated organizations.

established to follow up with host Governments on the status of investigations into deaths of United Nations personnel as a result of violent acts. The victims of violence registry system is expected to be operational by the end of 2017.

61. Lastly, in close collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Department continues to enhance the awareness of security professionals on human rights principles and policies.

### 3. Strengthening partnerships with non-governmental organizations

62. The United Nations and NGO networks strengthen partnership and cooperation through the implementation of the revised Saving Lives Together framework. The number of NGOs, international organizations and other partners with Saving Lives Together focal points at Headquarters has doubled since 2013 to 150 at present. To foster better understanding and enhance the visibility of the framework and to increase outreach, focal points from the United Nations and NGO networks cooperate closely to address common country-specific issues. An NGO network representative led an extensive session on Saving Lives Together at a workshop for all the Chief Security Officers of peacekeeping and political missions, held in June 2017. The Department expanded the participation of NGO security managers in the United Nations security professionals' certification programme.

63. The improvements in collaboration and information-sharing facilitated the provision of support to NGOs, including assistance in the relocation and medical evacuation of personnel, when feasible. Further initiatives are under way to strengthen collaboration with NGOs, including the training of designated officials.

## E. Focus on personnel

### 1. Duty of care

64. Following the submission in 2016 of the final report and recommendations of the Working Group on Duty of Care, led by the Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security, the High-level Committee on Management established a system-wide task force to oversee the implementation of the recommended actions. The recommended measures to promote duty of care for United Nations personnel include pre-deployment packages for personnel, training and support for managers operating in high-risk environments, standards for working and living conditions for personnel in high-risk environments, strengthened medical and psychosocial services and improved communications.

### 2. Response to critical incidents

65. As a result of the targeted attacks against United Nations personnel while delivering programmes in high-risk environments, the number of personnel exposed to stress and critical incident stress has increased. From January 2016 to June 2017, the Department, in collaboration with United Nations system organizations, provided psychosocial support in relation to 107 incidents, including hostage-taking incidents, and delivered 6,293 counselling sessions in 30 countries. Limited resources led to a decrease in psychosocial services, which were provided to 12,143 personnel in the reporting period, compared with 16,134 in the previous period. Meanwhile, United Nations system organizations continue to exercise duty of care in providing support to personnel affected by critical incidents.

66. Moreover, the security clearance system provides a listing of all United Nations personnel on travel status, allowing the United Nations security management system organizations to fulfil their duty of care responsibilities by

contacting personnel who may have been affected by security incidents. In 2016, security clearance was granted for more than 3 million trips (about 250,000 a month).

### 3. Promoting gender considerations and inclusion

67. The United Nations is committed to addressing security challenges faced by all personnel, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex personnel. In 2016, a United Nations security management system policy was promulgated on incorporating gender considerations into all aspects of security risk management and guidelines were issued on responding to gender-based security incidents. Moreover, the Department partnered with United Nations system organizations in the delivery of a training-of-trainers course on women's security awareness in more than 20 countries in 2017.

## IV. Strategic challenges

68. Since its establishment in 2005, the Department of Safety and Security, together with United Nations system organizations, has made considerable progress in strengthening the United Nations security management system. Nevertheless, enabling United Nations operations in an increasingly complex security environment remains extremely challenging. Although the number of deaths resulting from violent attacks or other safety-related incidents was lower in 2016 than in 2015, the fast-paced changes in the security environment and the rising demand for security support are increasingly stretching current resources.

69. To do more within the existing resources, the Organization has made strides in adapting and fine-tuning its strategic approaches to respond effectively to the changing global security environment. To this end, the Department's strategic priorities have focused on the realignment of resources, workforce planning, the improvement of business processes and the review of funding arrangements. To achieve the most effective and efficient use of the Organization's safety and security resources, the Department has identified a number of priority areas, including the integration of Secretariat security resources, the realignment of security operational resources, the implementation of the departmental human resources strategic framework, the delivery of security training, the better use of technology and innovations and the revitalization of the trust fund for security of staff members of the United Nations system.

70. While the Department continues to review and improve its resource management, there is a continuous need to ensure adequate resources that correspond with the rising security demands to enable mandated operations. Although the Department enables operations, including humanitarian activities, through its services to the United Nations security management system, there has not been a commensurate increase in security funding, in contrast with the significant increases in funding for humanitarian life-saving programmes.

71. In collaboration with the United Nations security management system organizations, the Department will continue to work with Member States to ensure adequate and predictable resources in response to the increased security-related needs. The Organization encourages all Member States to fund security as a programme delivery cost and to contribute to the trust fund with a view to supporting the efforts of the Department of Safety and Security to meet its mandate.

# V. Observations and recommendations

72. Global insecurity shows no sign of abating in the near to medium term. Amid armed conflicts and in volatile security contexts with complex threats and hazards, United Nations personnel continue to risk their lives and well-being in fulfilling United Nations humanitarian, sustainable development, human rights, and peace and security mandates. The international community continues to call upon the United Nations to be present in the most dangerous places in the world. With the mandate to deliver programmes in unprecedentedly challenging environments, the United Nations is facing increasing pressures on its overly stretched resources to protect its personnel and premises across the globe.

73. In the past 18 months, 28 United Nations personnel and more than 51 NGO humanitarian personnel lost their lives while carrying out programmes to save the lives of the most vulnerable. I am deeply saddened by these deaths and wish to express my sincere condolences to the families of those personnel. I condemn, in the strongest terms, all forms of crime and violence against United Nations personnel. The safety and security of United Nations personnel remains my first priority. Meanwhile, the Organization is continuing to rethink its security management strategies and has undertaken multidimensional innovative approaches that require continued support from all Member States.

74. The increase in direct attacks targeting the United Nations poses the gravest concern. During the reporting period, United Nations premises and vehicles came under direct attack 293 times. The number of attacks on United Nations premises rose, once again, to 56 attacks in 2016, making it the worst year on record for such attacks. Moreover, locally recruited and female personnel were particularly vulnerable to certain types of security and safety incidents. The steady rise in the number of reported gender-based incidents against United Nations female personnel merits particular attention. The Organization has a duty to support those who are most exposed to security risks and has a special responsibility towards its locally recruited personnel.

75. The number of deaths resulting from violent attacks or other safety-related incidents, however, declined from that in the previous years. This points to the overall effectiveness of United Nations safety and security programmes, including security risk management, training, policies and operations.

76. These positive developments, achieved despite an increasingly challenging security environment, can be sustained only through predictable and adequate resources for United Nations security programmes and operations. Security is an integral part of all United Nations programmes, not an administrative cost. Programme and donor funding must include security as a programme delivery cost, at a level that reflects the associated security risks.

77. Meanwhile, the Organization continues to realign its resources, including through the integration of the security resources of the Secretariat under the authority of the Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security and in collaboration with relevant departments of the Secretariat. The continued support of Member States is vital to this integration effort.

78. The protection of United Nations personnel and humanitarian personnel is the collective responsibility of the international community. I call upon Member States to take all necessary measures to ensure the safety and security of United Nations personnel and humanitarian personnel. It is imperative that

**all actors respect the inviolability of United Nations premises. This is essential for the continuation and successful implementation of United Nations operations. The primary responsibility of host Governments for the protection of United Nations and humanitarian personnel, in accordance with the relevant international legal instruments, cannot be overemphasized.**

79. **Impunity in cases of crimes committed against United Nations personnel and humanitarian personnel remains a serious cause for concern. Host Governments and their relevant national authorities are urged to take timely adequate action to bring to justice those perpetrators who have committed crimes against United Nations personnel and humanitarian personnel. The United Nations relies on Member States to investigate all crimes and acts of violence committed against United Nations personnel within their jurisdictions. Moreover, I urge Member States to take action against all unlawful detentions or arrests and obstruction to the freedom of movement of United Nations personnel and humanitarian personnel.**

80. **I recommend that the General Assembly remain engaged on the issue of the safety and security of United Nations personnel and continue to provide full support to the United Nations security management system.**

# Annex I

## United Nations personnel affected by safety and security incidents

| *Category of safety and security incidents* | *2011* | *2012* | *2013* | *2014* | *2015* | *2016* | *2017 (first six months)* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Fatalities resulting from acts of violence | 26 | 19 | 18 | 15 | 23 | 10 | 4 |
| Fatalities resulting from safety-related incidents | 44 | 15 | 10 | 15 | 16 | 11 | 3 |
| Injuries resulting from acts of violence | 145 | 112 | 82 | 65 | 99 | 70 | 29 |
| Injuries resulting from safety-related incidents | 166 | 209 | 144 | 101 | 130 | 93 | 58 |
| Abduction | 21 | 31 | 17 | 6 | 21 | 7 | 7 |
| Robbery | 417 | 408 | 314 | 530 | 511 | 375 | 234 |
| Residence break-in | 20 | 31 | 23 | 37 | 72 | 105 | 71 |
| Aggravated assault | 31 | 44 | 35 | 104 | 81 | 44 | 24 |
| Sexual assault | 5 | 4 | 4 | 8 | 12 | 17 | 19 |
| Burglary of residence | 418 | 493 | 322 | 430 | 380 | 316 | 206 |
| Intimidation | 224 | 209 | 81 | 149 | 228 | 150 | 132 |
| Harassment | 46 | 52 | 27 | 146 | 177 | 81 | 65 |
| Arrest and detention | 195 | 165 | 138 | 128 | 69 | 102 | 53 |
| **Total** | **1 758** | **1 792** | **1 215** | **1 734** | **1 819** | **1 381** | **905** |

## Annex II

### Attacks on United Nations premises and official vehicles

| Category of security incident | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 (first nine months) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Attacks on United Nations premises | 9 | 15 | 56 | 22 |
| Attacks on United Nations vehicles | 45 | 155 | 146 | 69 |
| Intrusions into United Nations premises | 26 | 129 | 90 | 44 |
| **Total** | **80** | **299** | **292** | **135** |

# Annex III

## United Nations civilian personnel affected by security incidents in 2016

| Category of security incident | Number of personnel affected | International staff affected | Locally recruited staff affected | Male | Female | Number of countries | Circumstances of security incident |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Fatalities resulting from acts of violence | 10 | 1 | 9 | 8 | 2 | 5 | Armed conflict (2); terrorism (3); crime (5) |
| Fatalities resulting from safety-related incidents | 11 | 2 | 9 | 9 | 2 | 9 | Road traffic accident (9); other safety-related incident (2) |
| Injuries resulting from acts of violence | 70 | 24 | 46 | 51 | 19 | 22 | Armed conflict (1); terrorism (22); crime (46); civil unrest (1) |
| Injuries resulting from safety-related incidents | 93 | 33 | 60 | 54 | 39 | 43 | Road traffic accident (86); other safety-related incident (7) |
| Abduction[a] | 7 | 2 | 5 | 7 | 0 | 5 | All United Nations personnel were released |
| Robbery[b] | 374 | 157 | 218 | 179 | 196 | 46 | |
| Residence break-in[c] | 105 | 58 | 47 | 58 | 47 | 28 | |
| Aggravated assault[d] | 44 | 2 | 42 | 42 | 2 | 17 | |
| Sexual assault | 17 | 7 | 10 | 5 | 12 | 12 | |
| Burglary[c] | 316 | 101 | 215 | 219 | 97 | 64 | |
| Intimidation[e] | 150 | 43 | 107 | 88 | 62 | 44 | |
| Harassment[f] | 81 | 38 | 43 | 52 | 29 | 29 | |
| Arrest and detention[g] | 102 | 6 | 96 | 93 | 9 | 21 | |
| **Total** | **1 581** | **474** | **907** | **865** | **516** | | |

[a] Act of restraint through the use of or the threat of use of force or through fraudulent persuasion, including hostage-taking involving demands as conditions for liberation, executed by non-State actors.

[b] Act or instance of unlawfully taking property through the use of violence or the threat of use of violence.

[c] Unauthorized and forceful entry with intent to commit a felony or crime aggravated by use of force or physical assault.

[d] Unlawful act that places personnel, without consent, in fear of immediate bodily harm or battery.

[e] Unauthorized and forceful entry with intent to commit a felony or crime.

[f] Act of making timid or fearful or of deterring by threats.

[g] Act of systematic or continued, unwanted and annoying actions that serve no legitimate purpose, causing substantial emotional distress.

[h] Acts executed by State actors.

## Annex IV

# Security incidents affecting personnel of non-governmental organizations, as reported to the Department of Safety and Security

| Category of security incident | Number of personnel affected | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 January 2014–30 June 2015 | 1 January 2015–30 June 2016 | 1 January 2016–30 June 2017 |
| Personnel who lost their lives as a result of acts of violence | 92 | 41 | 51 |
| Personnel injured as a result of acts of violence | 84 | 82 | 77 |
| Abducted personnel | 167 | 47 | 145 |
| Armed attacks on premises | 43 | 23 | 17 |
| Intrusion into premises | 71 | 218 | 128 |
| Armed attacks on vehicles | 129 | 230 | 251 |
| Lost vehicles | 45 | [a] | [a] |
| Other unspecified critical incidents | [a] | [a] | [a] |
| **Total** | **631** | **641** | **669** |

[a] Not previously recorded.

# Annex V

## Security incidents affecting area personnel of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

| Category of security incident | Number of area personnel affected | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 2015 | 2016 | Mid-2017 |
| Fatalities resulting from acts of violence | 0 | 4 | 0 |
| Fatalities resulting from safety-related incidents | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Injuries resulting from acts of violence | 15 | 8 | 3 |
| Injuries resulting from safety-related incidents | 6 | 2 | 0 |
| Abduction | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Robbery | 9 | 11 | 4 |
| Residence break-in | 1 | .. | .. |
| Aggravated assault | 28 | 35 | 29 |
| Sexual assault | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| Burglary of residence | 0 | .. | .. |
| Intimidation | 75 | 75 | 50 |
| Harassment | 5 | 2 | 4 |
| Arrest and detention | 30 | 26 | 10 |
| Missing personnel | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Theft | .. | 5 | 1 |
| Arson | .. | 0 | 1 |
| Fire | .. | 3 | 0 |
| Armed conflict | .. | 8 | 2 |
| Explosive remnants of war | .. | 0 | 1 |
| Vandalism | .. | 4 | 1 |
| Road traffic accidents | .. | 6 | 1 |
| Intrusion into United Nations premises | .. | 1 | 0 |
| Others | .. | 12 | 0 |
| **Total** | **192** | **205** | **112** |

[a] Not previously recorded.

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## Letter dated 12 May 2017 from the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity addressed to the Secretary-General

I wish to bring to your attention that, at its thirteenth meeting, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity adopted decision XIII/12, entitled "Marine and coastal biodiversity: ecologically or biologically significant marine areas".

In paragraph 2 of that decision, the Conference of the Parties requested the Executive Secretary to include, in the repository of ecologically or biologically significant marine areas, the summary reports prepared by the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice at its twentieth meeting, as contained in annex I to the decision, and to submit the reports to the General Assembly, and in particular to its Preparatory Committee established by General Assembly resolution 69/292: Development of an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, as well as to parties, other Governments and relevant international organizations in line with the purpose and procedures set out in its decisions X/29, XI/17 and XII/22. It also requested the Executive Secretary to submit the reports to the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Whole of the General Assembly on the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects.

Pursuant to those requests, the summary reports on the description of areas that meet the criteria for ecologically or biologically significant marine areas are provided in all official languages of the United Nations on the official website of the Convention at: www.cbd.int/decisions/cop/?m=cop-13.

The present letter is in line with similar previous communications (A/67/838 and A/69/794), whereby the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity transmitted to the Secretary-General the summaries of the results of the first two series of regional workshops on the description of areas that meet the criteria for ecologically or biologically significant marine areas.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 77.

(*Signed*) Cristiana **Paşca Palmer**
Executive Secretary

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